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SPIN

APOCALYPSE AGAIN

WHY THE
PHILIPPINES
WILL BE
OUR NEXT
VIETNAM

JOHN COUGAR MELLENBAMP

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

L.L. COOL J
TOM WAITS
THAT PETROL EMOTION
ROGER WATERS
JOHN HIATT
THE B-MOVIE
POWER BROKERS
POWER LUNCHING
WITH CHE GUEVARA



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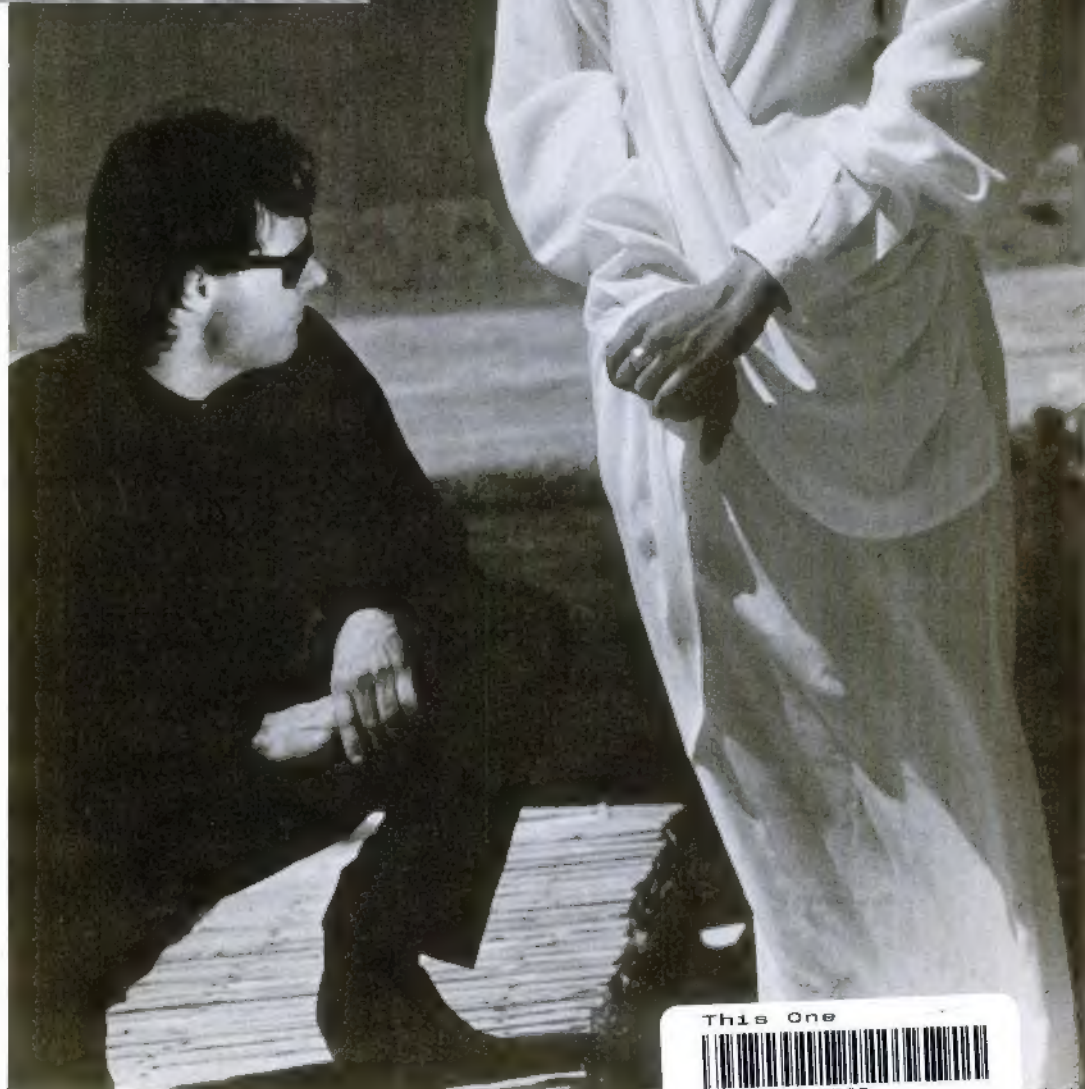


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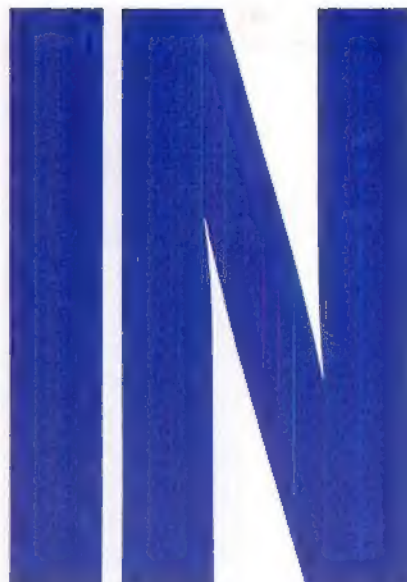
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September 1987

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Photograph above by
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TOP SPIN

Here at SPIN we try to keep up with the latest developments in our culture. We do our best to apprise our readers of the significant trends in pop music, and we attempt to provide some trenchant analysis of what's new. But we are also very concerned with what we call "the long view" and "the big picture."

Lately, because of America's foreign policy problems, we have been preoccupied with a question that makes our usual subject seem very fluffy indeed. Simply put, it is this: Can the music business survive a nuclear war?

In 1982, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategic and Nuclear Forces, Thomas Jones, stated that the United States could fully recover from an all-out war with the Soviet Union in two to five years. Said Jones, "If there are enough shovels to go around, everybody's going to make it." Clearly, Mr. Jones is a man with a shovel.

However, other experts have forecast a much longer period of recovery from a very small nuclear attack. A recent study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that an attack employing only 1% of the strategic nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union, aimed only at the oil business, would cripple the economy, reducing it to "near-medieval levels" for decades.

Clearly, there is a discrepancy here, one which should be resolved if we are to make intelligent plans for living through a nuclear war.

SPIN, being something of a specialized journal, decided to look into the music business's chances of surviving various forms of nuclear attack.

Obviously, an attack aimed at the petrochemical industry would have a crippling effect on the music industry since records and tapes are manufactured from vinyl, a petroleum product. Indeed, in a time of petroleum shortages the vinyl supply would be diverted to more critical areas, such as bomber armrests and prophylactics.

However, the music business might survive for a while on recycled vinyl—perhaps requiring that the consumer return an old vinyl record for each new one purchased. A complete suspension of the pressing of new records might also provide an opportunity to sell off inventories of unsold records, such as the Kiss solo albums, probably at higher prices.

Of course, if one's record collection or stereo were too near the ground-zero point of even a tactical nuclear device, the flash might partially melt albums, while the shock wave might destroy cassettes as well as stereo equipment itself. The electromagnetic field created by a blast might also erase tapes in any form. It would seem, therefore, that the laser CD is the most survivable

format for music, which is only one of the arguments in its favor. As for master recordings, they should always be kept in well-insulated vaults—the physical survival of the tape in a bunker does not in itself guarantee that a blast even ten miles overhead will not erase the music contained on the tape. However, metal masters will survive this sort of attack, so they should always be retained.

What sort of mood will a post-nuked America find itself in? Blues is bound to enjoy another revival, perhaps accompanied by a resurgence in Depression-style jazz, with the big bands coming back. Protest music, such as that of Joan Baez which can be had rather cheaply today in the bargain bins, is bound to enjoy a price resurgence.

Radio is certain to profit from nuclear war. Radios will survive televisions in a much shorter radius from ground zero. They will be a very useful form of communication, with telephone lines down and newspapers being unavailable due to the lack of paper. There will be plenty of time for music programming between instructions, declarations, and announcements.

However, should the pessimistic projections of M.I.T. prove accurate, should the nation be plunged into a dark ages of medievalism, it is possible that the music industry in this country would be entirely taken over by heavy-metal groups such as Saxon, Warrior, Styx, Slayer, Man O'War, Warlock, Possessed, Nuclear Assault, Celtic Frost, Death Angel, Venom, Overkill, Grim Reaper, Slaughter, Dirty Rotten Imbeciles, Grave Digger, Wastayed, Storm Troopers of Death, and Judas Priest.

Survivalism is bound to be a major concern of post-nuke pop fans, and no doubt the extreme aggression promoted by such groups will be valuable in an economy based on looting and pillaging. Furthermore it is possible that the heavy-metal vibe itself will prove tonic in a biosphere significantly enriched with metals such as plutonium (atomic weight 239), cesium (atomic weight 132.905), and thorium (atomic weight 232). Major musical movements, we now know, do not occur without reason. And we can think of little reason for heavy-metal music unless it is somehow connected with the introduction of heavy metals into the environment.

However, the results of our studies on the post-nuclear music-business economy are not yet complete, so in the meantime we bring you an issue filled with excellent articles on the happier sides of the world of music. But our research continues apace, and as we dig for the facts we have made sure that there are more than enough shovels to go around.

—Glenn O'Brien



Philippe Robert

Top: Tom Waits: Nighthawk at the Barbershop. Center: Scavengers in Manila, where collecting 100 bottles earns a handful of rice. Bottom left: A sober stare from John Hiatt. Bottom right: L.L. Cool J: Me and my Kangol.



Chris Carter



Chris Collins/McGraw



Glen E. Friedman

SPIN (ISSN 1086-1012) Volume 4 Number 10 Copyright 1987 by SPIN Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Published monthly in the United States by SPIN Publications, Inc., 1405 Broadway, New York, NY 10018-5905. Second-class postage paid New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to SPIN Magazine, P.O. Box 100, New York, NY 10018-0100. Second-class postage paid New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Distributed in U.S.A., Canada, and internationally by Curtis Circulation Company, 29 Henderson Drive, West Caldwell, NJ 07072. Tel: (201) 227-5100. Editorial offices as above. Publisher declares all responsibility in return unsolicited editorial matter, and all rights in portions published vest in publisher. Letters to SPIN Magazine or its editors are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part and therefore may be used for such purposes. Letters have the property of SPIN. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission from the publisher. Any similarity between persons or places mentioned in the fiction or general news and real persons, living or dead is coincidental. Subscriptions: U.S. \$11.95/yr (one year). Canada—\$13.00 for one year. Single copies: \$2.50 in U.S. and \$3.00 in Canada. Tel: 1-800-441-7478; in N.Y. 1-212-466-6000. Advertising offices: New York—SPIN, 1905 Broadway, New York, NY 10018-5905; Tel: (212) 466-6000. Midwest—SPIN, 113 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1810, Chicago, IL 60601; Tel: (312) 461-9191. Detroit—RPM Associates, 16291 14 Mile Road, Birmingham, MI 48009; Tel: (313) 644-6100. West—Coolley West, 1201 Flareview Drive, Suite 204-W, Hobbsland, CA 94504; Tel: (415) 330-7131. SPIN is a trademark of Bob Casone, Jr.



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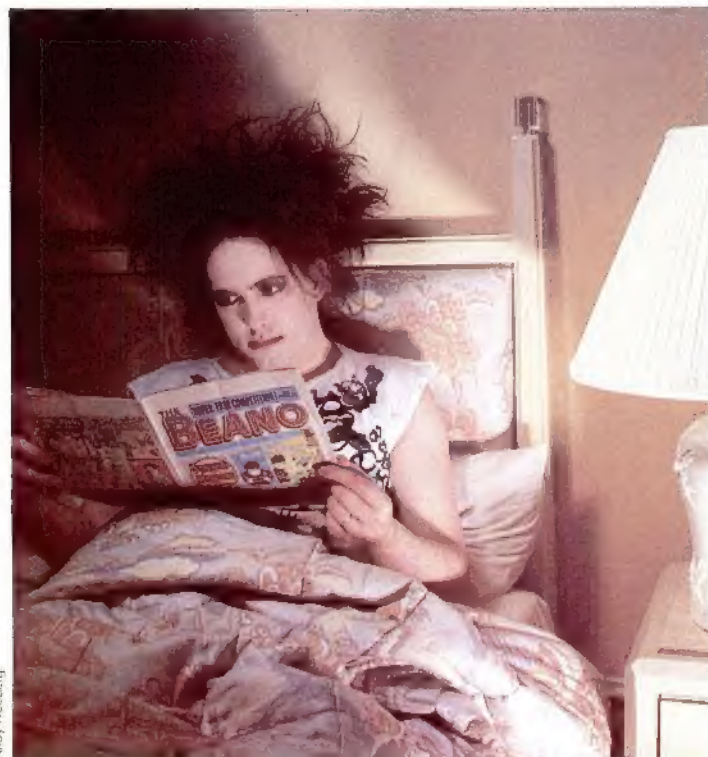
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POINT BLANK

Robert Smith of
The Cure. Every guy needs
his beauty rest.



Andy Fiebert

Letters

Edited by Karen Dolan

Nasty Bull

I'm ticked off about Bart Bull's nasty comments about Stevie Nicks in his review of Fleetwood's new LP, *Tango in the Night* (July). He bad-mouthed her contributions to the LP without giving any reasons. It was a character assassination, not a critique of her music. The motive must be a personal dislike of Stevie, her lifestyle, and envy of her immense success and popularity. I like her voice and unique metaphysical style of writing.

Kay Reding
Harlingen, TX

Charlotte sometimes?

Adam Sweeting's article on the Cure (July) was halfway decent until he screwed things up with the statement "And the Americans seem to think you're gay, Robert." Anyone, American or not, with half a brain, who's taken the time to listen to his lyrics, wouldn't come to that same

conclusion. Seems to me that it's just another case in point of judging someone by his appearance.

Sharon Gast
Greensboro, NC

Cover controversy

Even though the original Michael J. has a definite place in pop music history, I was disappointed to see his plastic face on the cover of last month's issue (June). Does SPIN really have to stoop to profiling these over-hyped superstars to sell magazines? Why couldn't you have run a picture of someone really exciting and mysterious like the Sex Clark Five?

Rachel Carter
San Francisco, CA

Sandra gets a 'D'

I am writing in response to your article, "Congratulations Scum" (July) by Sandra Bernhard. I think it was one of the most ignorant and tasteless

things you have ever printed. You don't know the class of '87 at all. We're not nerds and we're not assholes. We fall into our own category somewhere in between. We sure as hell will make it in this world, no matter what you think.

Desmond Ryan
Class of 1987
St. Joseph's Prep.
Philadelphia, PA

Amazing graduation address! I'm shocked that while everyone else seems to be living as though money were the root of all happiness, a publication would print such an appropriate slap in the face, directed toward so many of its own readers. What integrity! What truth! And please get Sandra Bernhard to contribute more often. No one has ever been so gracefully brutal. Thanks for the eye opener. It's nice to know the cool people are still the ones who care.

Michael Stiefel
Flushing, NY

Television man

Perhaps he well deserves the many accolades he has received, and adjectives such as "evasive" and "detached" apply to him, but Tom Verlaine (July) has a band that he would be pretty lame without. These people seem far more invisible to journalists than Tom Verlaine himself. After seeing a recent show which was part of the tour promoting *Flash Light*, it was the solidity of Fred Smith on bass and the inventive and thoughtful drumming of J.D. Daugherty that brought Verlaine's guitar virtuoso wanderings to life. When I saw him play six years previously, it was those same musicians that infused tension and excitement into Verlaine's introspective playing. Without the talent of the musicians he collaborates with, Verlaine puts me to sleep.

Polonaise O. Rabbane
Washington, D.C.

As much as I enjoy portions of the earlier Television albums, I don't wish Verlaine would turn back to that. I much prefer his current solo work as more contemporary, instrumentally sharp, and less arch in lyrical content. Author Eric Kling also fails to mention 1984's *Cover* album, an absolute gem which was uncharacteristically upbeat but still with a keen edge. Anyway, if Verlaine doesn't know who buys his albums or what they get from the music, he is removed. Personally, I find his best work uplifting, provocative, sly, loopy, exhilarating and at times deeply sad without sacrificing the beat. He deserves at least half the audience and

cash accorded the pedestrian hacks who usually top the charts.

Darren Cale
Irvine, CA

Rap attack

I'm really getting sick of all the coverage you guys give rap and the people who make it. Especially in the Singles department. Biz Markie? Eric B. and Rakim? Classical Two? Who gives a shit. Why don't you stick to interesting stuff like the *Codfathers*, or what about the new Jesus and Mary Chain 12? "April Skies"? Now that's the kind of thing people read your magazine for, so forget all this rap crap and leave it to a lesser magazine. It's just going to fade away like hip hop and Go Go music did.

Steve Douglas
Schaumburg, IL

Paulina who?

Nice Swimsuit Issue. But still try to cover every possible group, movie, TV show Evangelist crisis, whatever, every month. But don't be pressured.

Glenn Hawley
Fairport, NY

Boo who?

In your July issue there was an article about Concrete Blonde getting booed as an opening act for Eddie Money and I think people that do crap like that should be shot. Personally I have a concrete bond with Concrete Blonde and I think they are way better than Eddie Money. Johnette Napolitano is one of the best songbirds to come along in a long, long time and the band as a whole has a concrete future. I boo all the idiots that booed them.

Steve Saturn
C'ville, IL

You can't eat us for Breakfast

At first I was blown away by the trashing I got in SPIN's review of *Breakfast Club* (June). I mean, we've been getting such raves (even from Madonna, even from Steve Jones, Chris Eliot—really, the list goes on) that it made me feel pretty low. But wait! The critic hates it, artists like it, the public approves. It's the best of all worlds, right? So I re-read the review. Hmm, it's not so bad. There's even an accidentally witty, off-beat reference to our hit video, with the critic's constant allusion to "getting laid," which used to refer to a sexual experience, but now of course means the chicken and egg thing.

Dan Gilroy of
Breakfast Club
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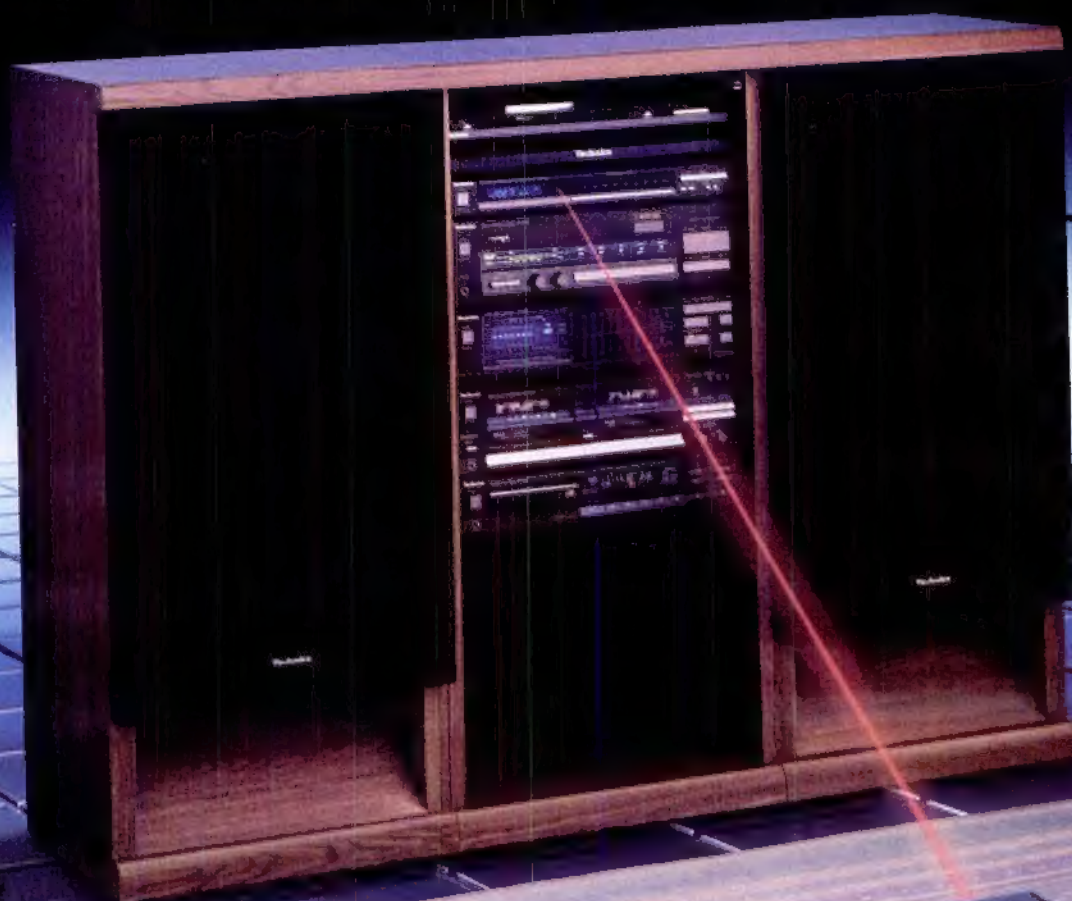
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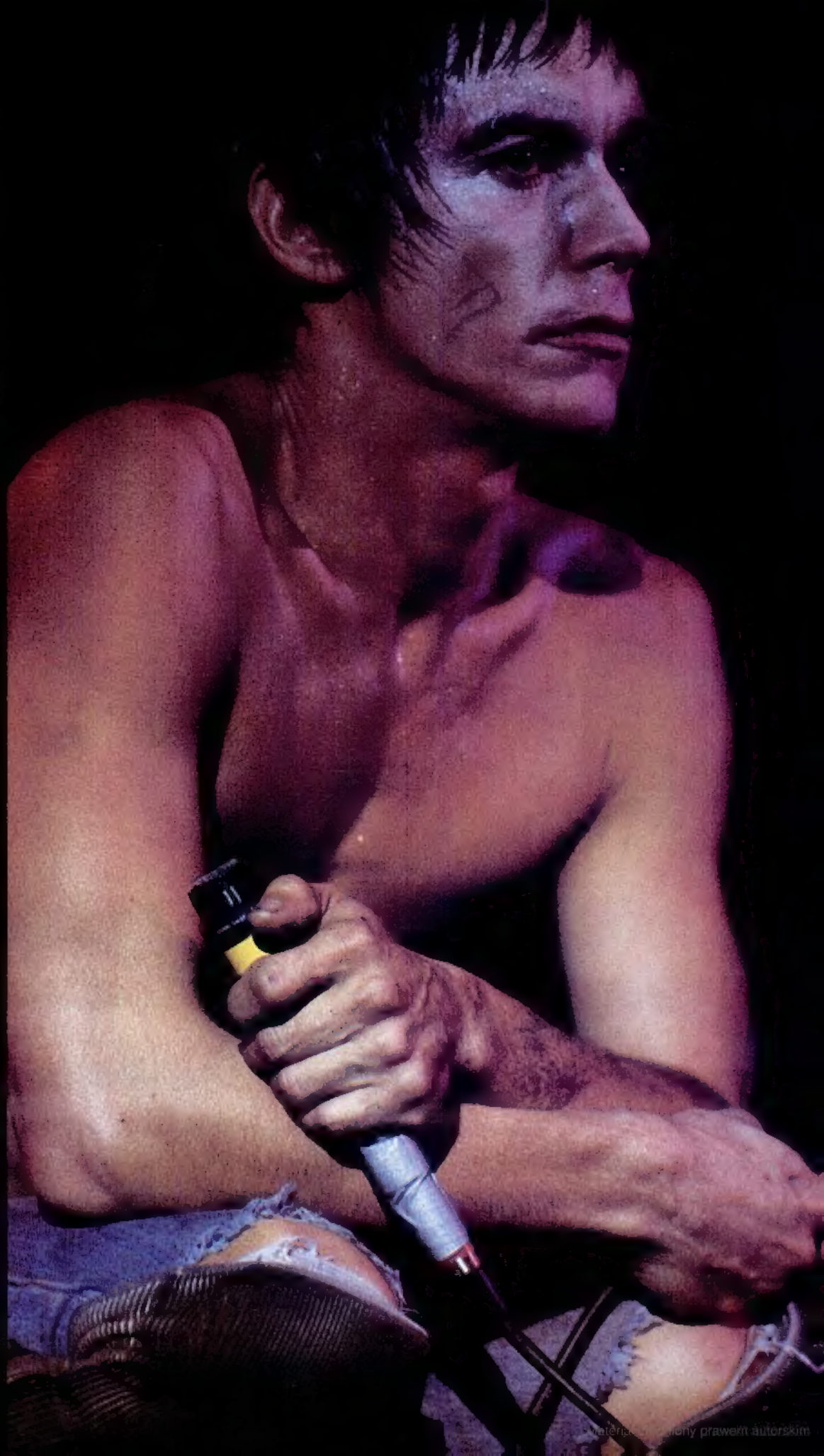
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FLASH

Rock Criticism,
Adrian Sherwood,
Beatle Boot,
The Barbie Trials,
Penn Jillette,
The 'Nam,
Noel, Missed
Information.

Edited by
John Leland.



Back in the '50s we could only gasp in awe as a team of rock critics developed the polio vaccine. It was rock critics who coined the formula "E=MC²." A Soviet rock critic made Sputnik fly, and then an American rock critic put the first man on the moon. In the '70s rock critics launched the computer revolution with the discovery of tiny integrated circuits, while on a larger level they built all 110 floors of the World Trade Center. And now we hear they're working on a cure for AIDS.

But let's not forget, in the words of Tolstoy, "Error is the force that welds men together."

STEVE FORBERT *Alive on Arrival*

"Nothing, nothing in this world, is going to stop Steve Forbert, and on that I'll bet anything you'd care to wager."

—Paul Nelson, *Rolling Stone*, 1979

BOB DYLAN "Like a Rolling Stone"

"To start with, Dylan is saddled with a horrific backing dominated by syrupy strings, amplified guitar and organ. The monotonous melody line and Dylan's expressionless intoning just cannot hold the interest for what seems like the six longest minutes since the invention of time. Those Dylan lyrics are another problem. He seems to be getting more and more obscure."

—Bob Dawborn, *Melody Maker*, 1965

IGGY POP *Lust for Life*

"The new Pop platter, *Lust for Life*,

eats it! The tunes are uncaptivating, sometimes self-indulgent, and generally rancid. The Ig's vocals are far from manic and arresting and the execution is stale and lagging. This, the second RCA release of inferior Iggy product (counting that abomination, *The Idiot*), only obscures the legend of the Stooges, and complicates the memory of rock and roll's ultimate record, *Raw Power*. I mean, gimme a break, Jake! For all of 5,283 reasons why the Stooges were the heppiest there are 10,566 why this new LP sucks pumice."

—Gregg Turner, *Creem*, 1977

PUNK

"Honestly, if either Patti Smith or Johnny Rotten represents the future of rock—and I don't think they do—then I'm off with the old ladies to the air raid shelter until it blows over."

—Allan Jones, *Melody Maker*, 1976

IRON CITY HOUSE ROCKERS *Have a Good Time (But Get Out Alive)*

"The Houserockers' new album earns them a permanent pedestal in the hallowed halls of the immortals. They play like the great lost bar band that never made it . . . and then finally did."

—Robert A. Hull, *Creem*, 1980

BEATLES "She Loves You"

"It strikes me they've rested far too much on the success they've already had. This falls short of their other discs. I know they go for simplicity of lyrics

in appealing to teenagers, but this time they've carried it to the idiotic. The kids will buy it, and will be very disappointed. This is a nothing record. . . ."

—Brian Matthew, *Melody Maker*, 1963

U2 *October*

"Listening to U2 can make a person care about music again. U2 are so provocatively dreadful it's almost demanded."

—James Truman, *Village Voice*, 1981

JESSIE WINCHESTER *Third Down, 110 to Go*

"Perhaps the most important voice of our young decade, a poet with the image power of a Dylan or Mitchell, a singer with the strength and range we simply have not heard before from a contemporary male musician."

—Stephen Davis, *Rolling Stone*, 1972

NEW YORK DOLLS

"They were dragged down by their lead singer, David Johansen, who has two problems he'll probably never overcome—a Jagger fixation that borders on the necrophilic and his terrible voice."

—Dan Nooger, *Village Voice*, 1973

AC/DC *Let There Be Rock*

"These guys suck. Somewhere in the granite mudpies of hard rock, there's got to be a distinction between boogie and plod, and AC/DC falls into the latter category . . . Besides all the saber-tooth skeleton clatterings, Mr. Hotshot Guitarist Young never once takes off, content to lay back scraping off the Nair rusted on his strings."

—Rick Johnson, *Creem*, 1977

—Celia Farber and Beth Fertig



Mark Weiss

Iggy Pop eats it (left)
while Angus Young (above) sucks.

GREAT MOMENTS IN ROCK CRITICISM

ADRIAN SHERWOOD EATS DUB FOR BREAKFAST

On all good dub records, you get off as much on what isn't there as what is."

Ten years ago, Adrian Sherwood, a white Englishman working in East London, set out to turn dub on its head. Working under the aegis of his own On-U Sound label, he formed an umbrella of groups—the Dub Syndicate, Singers and Players, African Head Charge, New Age Steppers, and a handful of others—and proceeded to pull dub apart and put it back together in his own schizophrenic image. A New Age Steppers melody appears on a Dub Syndicate record over an African Head Charge rhythm—Sherwood scrambles the elements and jams them synapses with the buzzes and static of industrial noise.

"I use the old effects like space echoes and lay them against the new technology, using sounds that don't usually work together to create something refreshing. The sound quality is such that every time you hear a track, you can pull out something different, little melodies that aren't quite there."

The latest chapter of the On-U Sound story began three years ago when Sherwood met Keith LeBlanc, Doug Wimbish, and Skip McDonald, the original house rhythm section on all the old Sugarhill rap records. Using them as a core, Sherwood formed another umbrella of groups—Tackhead, Fats Comet, Gary Clall's Killer, and former Pop Group singer Mark Stewart and his band Maffia—and set out to perform an even more violent sonic attack on hip-hop music. What they came up with is loud, abrasive, politically confrontational, and awfully funky. But don't expect to hear it on the radio.

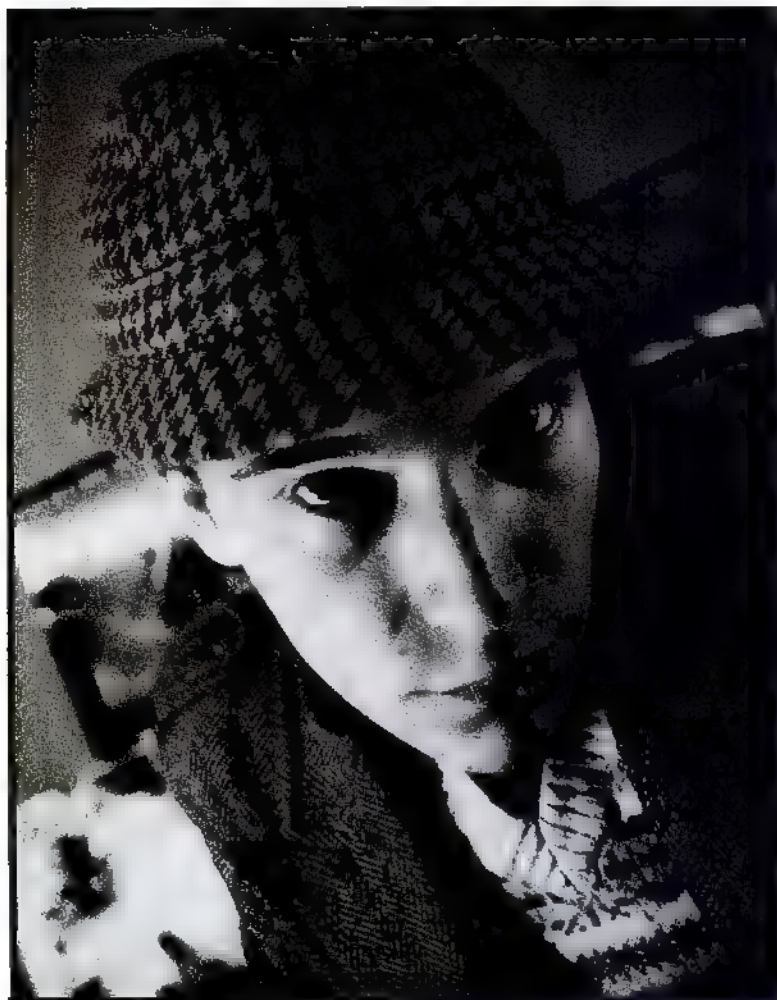
"We're not putting out to let me stick my tongue in your ear" type of dance records. They're well thought out, and the records seem to be two or three years ahead of what the rest of the industry is doing. Songs like Fats Comet's 'Bop Bop' or 'Stormy Weather' are three years old and they still don't fit in."

"The corporate nature of music encourages people to make music that fits into their plan. I think it's futile to make records while consciously wanting to sell large numbers of records. We are trying to strike a balance between infiltrating the music corporations—playing games with the major labels—and putting out records that satisfy us. Nine times out of ten, they're not going to fit in the corporate structure."

Sherwood, nonetheless, keeps busy. Besides his On-U work, which now includes over 40 albums, he has recently worked his hyper mixing on records by Einstürzende Neubauten, Depeche Mode, the Woodentops, Simply Red, Ministry, and Cabaret Voltaire; he'd do more, but he hasn't got the time. Word is that if you call his management, they'll tell you he's too busy, but if you call him, he'll agree. "But if I could work with anyone," he says, "it would have to be Whitney Houston. I love her!"

We can only wonder what African Head Charge would do with her subsequently cannibalized melodies.

—Scott Burlingtonham



Peter Anderson

BEATLE BOOT



A few months ago, Paul McCartney suggested that somebody find the tapes of the Beatles' unreleased *Get Back* album and release it today. Well, somebody has.

Get Back, the album finished by the Beatles in early 1969 but never issued, has surfaced. And surfaced is the word. For although the sound quality is wonderful stereo, and the cover a facsimile of the original, this is a counterfeit album—an illegal labor of love.

But this doesn't make the release any less historically

important. *Get Back* is a concept album—not another in the series of mostly mediocre "Get Back Sessions" bootlegs that have been floating around for the last 18 years. The concept: "to show us with our trousers off," as John Lennon put it—an informal LP of the Beatles "getting back" to the basics, making music without overdubs and orchestras. It's just the Beatles and their instruments, plus an old friend, keyboardist Billy Preston. The album, which was to be accompanied by a documentary on its making and a world tour or internationally broadcast concert, was McCartney's effort to reunite a band that was falling apart.

The group went so far as to announce release dates for the album (magazines actually reviewed it), and to ship promotional copies to 200 radio stations in North America, only to recall them almost immediately. Why? Basically because the whole *Get Back* project didn't come off the way McCartney had hoped. The documentary on the making of the LP turned into *Let It Be*, a motion picture depicting the de facto unmaking of the Beatles. The concert turned into a hasty performance on the rooftop of their Apple headquarters in London—the group's last appearance. And the album devolved into *Let It Be*.

Get Back, according to Beatles road manager Mal Evans, was intended to be "just a friendly album that invites you to join in on what happens in the

Beatles' recording studio . . . with none of the loose ends tied up." It is indeed that—which may be why the group decided against release. There are muffled lyrics, false starts and patter between songs (one song, "Teddy Boy," is half finished), which in 1969 might have been a bit too outrageous. Or perhaps, as the Beatles said at the time, the LP was held up to coincide with release of the film. In any case, the *Get Back* session tapes gathered dust for about nine months until, the story goes, Lennon gave them to Phil Spector with the instructions, "Make a record out of this." The result was *Let It Be*, an album quite different from *Get Back*.

The big differences: "The Long and Winding Road" is composed of just McCartney at piano, Ringo tapping lightly behind, Preston at keyboards, and somebody on guitar (the gushing schmaltz of the string-laden Spector version is absent); "Two of Us" is a bit sweeter and more soulful, slower, and with different harmonies; "Teddy Boy," McCartney's ballad, features Lennon as a square-dance caller; and "Don't Let Me Down" displays real soul and power, different from the version released on the single.

The album ends with a brief, rather odd reprise of "Get Back." Which is, more or less, an apt description of the latest chapter in this long and winding story.

—Rip Rense

THE REFRESHEST

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.

THE BARBIE TRIALS



Chris Carroll

Though maligned American Dream is alive and well. Any girl, according to Mattel, can go out there a nobody and come back a Barbie doll. America is a great country. In late 1986, Mattel sponsored a talent search for the human version of one of its newest dolls, Rocker Barbie.

The requirements? Age: 18-25. Height: 5'6" minimum. A pop voice and a willingness to commit a year of your life to Mattel. According to a Mattel press release, "Over 450 million Barbie dolls and other members of her family have been sold worldwide. Placed head-to-toe, that's enough dolls to circle the earth more than three times!"

Never thought it quite like that.

They came to New York from Bloomington and Scarborough and Antioch to realize their dreams. With names like Tiffany and Gidget and Tammy and Robin (who came because her whole life people have told her she looks like Malibu Barbie), 42 wanna-Barbies assembled in the St. James Theatre. Each contestant sang two songs according to Mattel's specifications, "one ballad, one uptempo contemporary pop song."

The St. James Theatre, an elegant old house, was half empty. There were one or two members of Barbie's family in the audience, including a woman in a large fur who resembled Barbie's mother. (Come to think of it, Ken and Barbie didn't have parents, did they?)

When the tryouts were over, and countless hopefuls had offered "I'm So Excited (Because I'm Rocker Barbie)," disappointment reigned. No Rocker Barbie had been chosen.

Rocker Barbie's exact duties remain nebulous. There would have been a concert tour of some kind, and Barbie would have been produced by Giorgio Moroder, according to Mattel spokesperson Candace Irving. Irving didn't comment on Barbie's salary.

"We're looking for three major requirements," she said. "A great singing voice, a resemblance to Barbie, and 'the essence of Barbie.' We need to find someone who has three out of three. We are bringing a legend to life for the first time in 28 years."

Heady stuff.

And according to Mattel's press release, this is just the latest in a long line of Barbie innovations. "There have also been fun features introduced over the years... wigs for Fashion Queen Barbie in 1963, eyes that opened and closed for Miss Barbie in 1964, hair and clothes which would change color when swabbed with a special solution in 1966, a loving little kiss from Kissing Barbie to a special friend in 1979, and an engaging wink for Western Barbie in 1980."

That explains it, then. Finding a woman who can wear a wig, open and close her eyes, wink, kiss, and wear clothes that change color, well... that's a tall order.

For now, Mattel has decided to use a lip-syncing model. But have courage. One day, some girl, somewhere, will be able to proudly fill Barbie's tiny stilettos.

—Sukey Pett

POISON PENN

Penn Jillette wants to know: "When did David Byrne turn into Alan Alda? Seems one night I went to sleep and he was cool, and when I woke up he was an asshole."

When Penn and his partner, Teller, aren't scamming audiences during their stage show, or dumping cockroaches on David Letterman, or appearing in Run-D.M.C. videos, they lead their own lives. Teller likes reading at the Library of Congress. Penn runs his own record label, 50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (pronounced *Skidillion*) Watts of Power in the Hands of Babies, and plays bass in Bass, Bongos, and Bob.

Penn likes to keep people off balance, and gets excited easily. "People don't see that David Alan Coe and Sun Ra are doing the *same fuckin' thing!*" His ideal concert would be "Luciano Pavarotti, Willie Nelson, Dean Martin, and Lou Reed on the same bill. You'd charge five bucks a ticket and make everybody sit through *everything*." Penn is big on force, on unleashing wild possibility. "Salvador Dali said, 'So little of what might happen does happen.'" "To get things going 'just takes an ounce of bravery, which so many people seem to lack.'"

Last year, Penn got a phone call from his friend M.C. Kostek, who had introduced him to Half Japanese more than a decade ago. "He said, 'You just made a "Miami Vice," asshole. What are you doing with the money?" "Skid was born."

The first band on the roster, naturally, was Half Japanese. Jad and David Fair's approximation of anarchy. "Jad and David have a real wildness," says Penn, "not

based on insanity, drugs, or alcohol—but from a rage to live. You know, if you can't put your hand through a plate-glass window sober, you ain't worth shit." He also adored Moe Tucker of the Velvet Underground. She signed.

The 50 Skid attitude towards Moe is outright hero worship. Kostek, who also publishes the Velvet Underground fanzine *What Goes On*, introduced Tucker to the Fairs via tape about five years ago. "They recorded 'Pale Blue Eyes' with a blank drum track," says the sweet-voiced mother of five from her south Georgia home, "and I filled in the grooves. I loved the tape and we became friends."

They met in Orlando a year ago, and spent one night in a garage producing Moe's first record in five years, the fun EP called "MoeJadKateBarry." She plans to record an LP in Athens, to be produced by Peter Buck. Some limited engagements with Half Japanese are scheduled for the fall. "I have to hang on to my crappy little job," at a Wal-Mart Distribution Center. "I can't leave for a month."

Penn started the Three B's with two friends, Dean "Bongos" Seal and Robert "Bob" "Running" Elk, as an apartment band. "The plan was never to play out. We were three guys with other jobs." But the 50 Skid tour needed a cheap opening act. Skid president Kostek signed them after the D.C. gigs. The tour ended with two jammed nights at Maxwell's in Hoboken, New Jersey, where the Three B's did one song that trashed the Boss's five-record set. The Jersey crowd laughed. Penn's exercise in bravery is ready for the next phase.

—Joe Gioia



Jim Cunningham

JAMMING THE 'NAM

Murray, a historian and vet himself, is aiming directly at the great adolescent mass out there. Thus he's sacrificed the cussing and excessive gore that would've reflected the war as it was *really* fought—but would've also forced the book off most newsstands and into audience-limiting comic shops. It's a trade-off he's more than willing to make. "We're trying to produce a teaching tool here, as well as an entertaining comic."

"Kids today are starving for information about the war," Murray points out, "but until recently nobody's given it to them 'cause it was considered too 'hot' a subject. I'm trying to open some lines of com-



goes by for the troops between issues just as it does for the reader (so the kid introduced in the first issue is about to be rotated back home, and eight years from now—when the book hits the 1973 troop pull-out—the story will end). Clearly, this is a comic that doesn't just *put up with* comic-ness, but *uses* it to a desired effect.

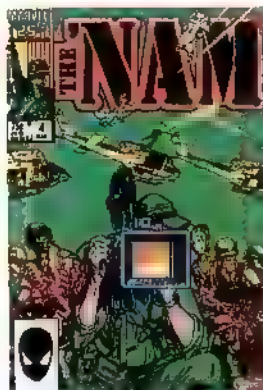
Final word goes to ex-Green Beret, who said while thumbing issue No. 7 (which explains the roots of the war from a Vietnamese point of view), "Hell, I wish I'd've had this twenty years ago." No shit—and if someone'd given it to LBJ, maybe we'd all've been saved a whole lot of grief.

—Lou Stathis

Where's the *last* place you'd expect to find a bracingly realistic, evenhanded account of the Vietnam War? Not counting the Government Printing Office, smartass. Would you believe a Marvel Comic?

Yep, Marvel Comics—that smarmily self-congratulatory flambo of the funny-book biz, and base-camp for the world's crankiest superheroes—has deployed *The 'Nam*, an only moderately sanitized grunt's-eye view of the war we'd rather forget (but can't seem to).

That this very successful monthly comic has managed for the last year to masquerade as just another piece of escapist juvenilia ain't at all accidental. Writer Doug



munication between the younger kids and their older brothers, or uncles, or fathers who were vets and don't talk about the war. I get at least two or three letters a month that say, 'I showed the issue to my dad, and he started telling me about something similar that happened to him.' Those letters make me feel really good."

It is to *The 'Nam's* credit that its compromises not only don't harm the book (i.e., alienate those of us over 14), but also allow it some interesting nuances of its own. Like artist Mike Golden's juxtapositions of caricatured figures with photo-realistic weaponry, and Murray's unique concept of "real time" storytelling, where a month



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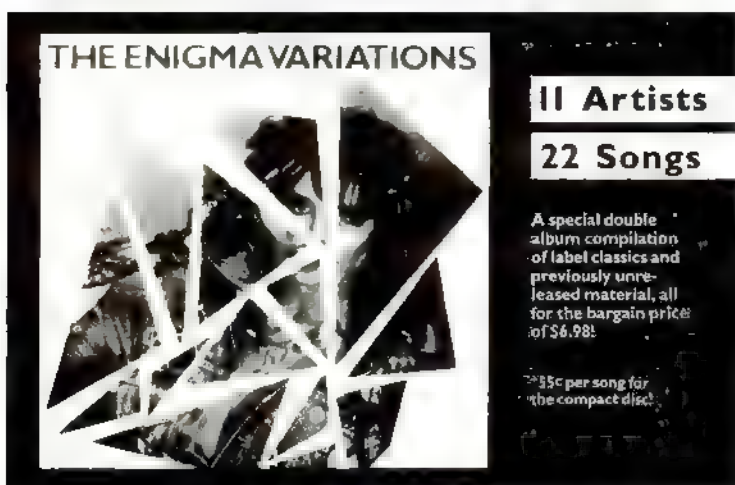


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THE FIRST NOEL

"My music knocks down the stereotype that dance music is soft." So says Noel, a 21-year-old ex-gang-member-turned-busboy-turned-singer, whose first single, "Silent Morning," has put some sting back into a genre that has recently choked itself on syrupy overproduction.

Born in the Bronx, Noel ran for a time with a teen gang called the Young Skulls, an offshoot of the older and more notorious Savage Skulls. "We did the usual things just to prove we were all together. A gang makes you feel invincible, but I always knew it was really the most temporary of things, that I had to stand out on my own if I was ever going to do the right thing." The "right thing," he says, was staying in school, although many of his cohorts stayed away. The soundtrack to Noel's gang life was hip hop; school changed all that. "After running around like I did, doing schoolwork wasn't the easiest thing; I'd always be listening to the radio, pop radio, groups like the Police and U2. I had this corny dream that most kids do: that I could be in a rock band."

His first break came when he heard that some kids in the neighborhood had a makeshift studio and needed a singer. Noel volunteered without ever having sung for anyone in his life. He also brought in his song "Silent Morning."

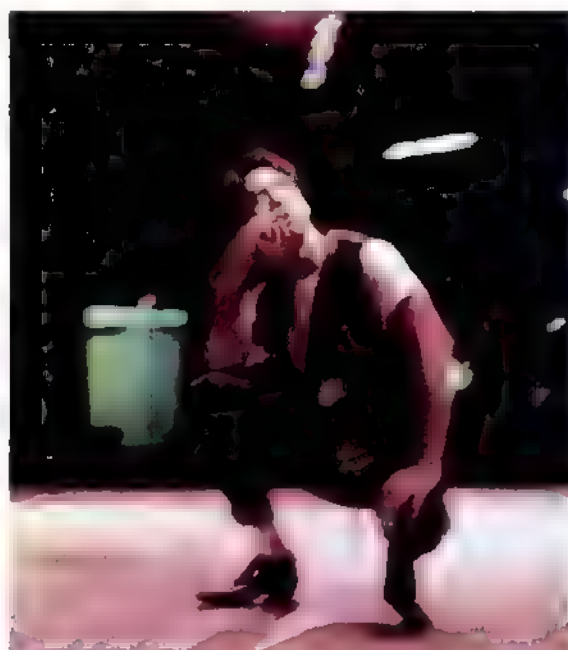
Noel made a demo and then got a job at one of New York's fiercest nightclubs, the Inferno, about which club manager Vito Bruno has said "If we'd go through a night and no one got shot, that was a success." According to Noel, "Some of the hardest kids in the boroughs hung out there. I knew them and their families. Just watching them hang out looking for trouble made me realize I had to move on too." Noel gave his demo to Bruno,

who delivered it to 4th & B'Way and then coproduced it with his DJ partner, Roman Ricardo. Little Louie Vega, one of the premier architects of today's dance-floor sound, put together the final remix. The stage was set for Noel's first performance.

It took place at the Manhattan club 10-18, on the same night that ex-model and Madonna protégé Nick Kamen made his U.S. debut. Noel sang for a testy audience of nearly 4,000 who didn't come to be entertained by a busboy. "It was weird," he says. "A lot of the people in the crowd, I knew from the street and Inferno days. The last thing they saw me doing was washing beer glasses." Noel walked onstage alone, in a white T-shirt, black vest, and blue jeans. As the music kicked in he lit a cigarette, then just as quickly flicked it angrily into the audience. The crowd cheered, the drums came up, and Noel kicked his leg over the mike stand, playing out onstage the fight-and-cut stances the Young Skulls had used on the street. The kids moved toward him and, when it was over, erupted into cheers that Noel remembers as "the warmest 30 seconds of my life." MTV called the night "a famous model-turned-rock-star from England was blown away by an unknown Latin singer from the Bronx."

The "unknown" tag is now long gone. Kids copy his dress code, "James Dean down-Bronx style," and his cigarette toss, the trademark of his live shows. His album will be out at the beginning of next year. "Even with all that," says Noel, "Vito still has me carry a beer case now and then, just to remind me I'm not dreaming."

—Scott Mehno



John Chon

INFORMATION

MISS

The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), Tipper Gore's scheme to **replace rock critics** with senators' wives, is on the prowl again. The group's current **Top 10**: *Bedrock* by Thrashing Doves, *Look What the Cat Dragged In* by Poison, *Skinny Puppy's Perpetual Mind Intercourse*, the Beastie



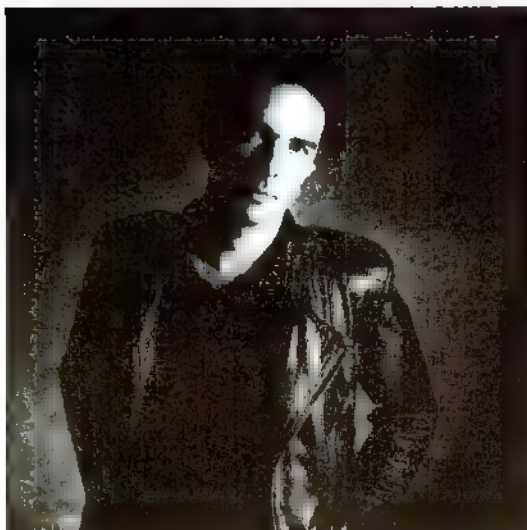
Pennie Smith

Boys' *Licensed to Ill*, Simply Red's *Men and Women*, Waysted's *Save Your Prayers*, Mötley Crüe's *Girls, Girls, Girls*, Anthrax's *Among the Living*, Ozzy Osbourne and Randy Rhoads' *Tribute*, and *Night Songs* by Cinderella. Such are the **menaces** that threaten today's decent (white) youth. ▲ **Joan Jett**, who claims not to give a damn about her **bad reputation**, is suing *Playboy* over a 1982 pictorial of an **under-dressed woman** identified in the magazine as Jett. Unfortunately—or fortunately, as the case may be—the woman wasn't Jett, but another member of the Runaways. Jett says the pic **impaired** her reputation; *Playboy's* attorney claims that, coming from a punk rocker, such a claim is **"preposterous."** ▲ The town of Austin, Minnesota, is throwing a **major shindig** to celebrate the 50th birthday of its favorite son, **Spam**, perhaps the world's **finest** luncheon meat product. Festivities, which will continue throughout the year, include a Spam Cook-off, a Jaycees Spam 'n' Hotcakes Breakfast, a **parade** led by Mickey and Minnie Mouse, and the eagerly anticipated **Salute to Spam** airshow. ▲ Phillip **"Snakefinger"** Lithman, best known as the guitarist for the Residents (the guy without the mask), died of a heart attack on July 1. He was 38. Ironically, Ralph Records released his new 7-inch single the following day; it's called "There's No Justice in Life." ▲ Like the PMRC and Spam, Soviet **glasnost** continues apace. Melodiya, Russia's **government-owned** record company, has published that nation's first **singles and album charts**. The big winner is of course seasoned singer **Alla Pugatchova**, who scored three Top 10 singles and the No. 1 album, *Happiness in Private Life*. Lisa Lisa don't mean squat in Moscow. ▲ Meanwhile, a Soviet study has **denounced heavy metal** as economically debilitating: "The wilder the music," claims the report, "the lower is the level of young people's working ability. Heavy metal listeners are affected by psychophysiological **mechanisms of addiction**. If they are isolated from such music for a week, their general level of health declines. They become more irritable, and their **pulse becomes irregular**. This means we have a specific disease on our hands, especially in the case of **very loud** music." The report agrees with other Soviet studies that found that heavy metal "diminishes the activities of the right half of the brain, which leads to a decline in creative abilities and productive thinking." ▲ **King Hassan II** of Morocco independently came to a similar conclusion, and **banned** a huge international pop festival (well, not that huge—**Big Audio Dynamite** was the big name) after he learned that **only 10%** of all Moroccan schoolchildren had passed their year-end exams. ▲ The Florida state attorney has **dropped charges** against Laura Ragsdale, the record store clerk who sold a copy of the 2 Live Crew's *2 Live Is What We Are* album to a minor. Bay County sheriff **Lavelle Pitts** warned, "We can only hope that the actions taken by the sheriff's department will not send any **mixed signals** to persons who would attempt to **profit** in the sale of pornography or obscene material." ▲

King Hassan don't like it: Mick Jones (above) is run off the road to Morocco.

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ELEKTRA

EMOTIONAL RESCUE



That Petrol Emotion ignite post-punk rock with incendiary politics. And they're putting out the fire with gasoline.

Article by Jon Savage

I'd like to give this country an enema," says Steve Mack, about not very much in particular. It's a typical not-very-much-in-particular English day, the usual November in June. Reamann O'Gormain is dressed accordingly. Mack, on the other hand, is wearing a very happening shirt—pink and orange day-glo Hawaiian—which positively radiates in the gloom of our surroundings. Reamann and I bask in its reflected glow, while Mack warms himself up.

"I was at this gig last night and I had this revelation," he says. "I was watching a band. They were trying really hard. The singer was really manic and he had this great pair of manic brown eyes. He was running all about the stage and I thought, 'What's missing?' I started listening to the lyrics and I thought,

'He can't be serious.' You can't say, 'Baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, I was born in a shotgun shack in a one-horse town.' I mean, let's get real here! It just turns it into farce. It's really important that people say what they mean."

It's June in London, and Seattle-born Steve Mack is visibly frustrated. Reamann just doesn't show it. Neither of them has much time for their adopted home. "There are more and less subtle ways of venting your frustration," That Petrol Emotion write on their second album, *Babble*. But it's convenient. London is still the breeding ground for a lot of musical talent. And not being English—Mack is American, while Reamann and the others are from Northern Ireland—That Petrol Emotion aren't tainted by the current range of British hang-ups. This makes

"The idea that anybody still has a role to play is unacceptable. There are no more roles to play."



That Petrol Emotion (L-R) Steve Mack, Damian O'Neill, Ciaran McLaughlin, Reamann O'Gormain, John O'Neill.

them energetic, idealistic, and socially progressive, qualities that immediately place them above dozens of other London bands. They recently released *Babble* to some justified acclaim: it's an intelligently paced, well-produced album of 11 sharp, moving songs that mix poetry, post-punk guitar, and hip-hop backbeats. As the title hints, their concern is language—both musical and political—and their express intent is to communicate an idealism and a positiveness in these two degraded areas. Naturally, this involves some interesting contradictions, and that's what makes their sparks fly.

Contradiction number one involves language. That Petrol Emotion speak English, but they're not British. Reamann and, I assume, the others, who are not present, are highly aware of Northern Ireland's status as Britain's last colony, shackled by the obsolete fetters of a vanished empire. This realization informs That Petrol Emotion's politics, which are clear and simply expressed, and give the group much of its bite. Their record sleeves give pieces of information about methods of control in Northern Ireland—both legal and judicial—which Reamann sees as becoming increasingly applicable to mainland Britain itself, as social unrest increases. The day we speak there are reports of rioting in Chapeltown, a predominantly West Indian area of Leeds. Steve Mack shares his bandmates' views, but he has more fundamental problems. Being an open sort, he can't cope with the basic British form of communication, the wind-up. Being an American, he can't cope with British small-mindedness, or nostalgia.

"I'm just getting tired of having to explain myself because I'm an American. I've never particularly wanted to be one. It's just a very tight community here. In America, you can go someplace and not have

to worry about it, whereas here the walls have ears. You have to watch your step. The snobbery, the whole hierarchy of bands, is ridiculous."

So Steve Mack, who quit his computer-science class at the University of Washington, and the U.S., three days before graduation because he got the horrors at the thought of a middle-class lifestyle, and Reamann O'Gormain, who studied French at the University of Ulster, now find themselves attempting to raise people's consciousness in an arena that has become a reflection of the selfish aspirations and thoughtlessness of our power politics.

Contradiction number two: how the hell do you reconcile politics with pop, and succeed where so many others have failed? "When we started," Reamann says, "we felt we had a moral obligation to tell people what was going on in Northern Ireland. Instead of ramming it down their throats, we put the information on the sleeves. It's not that all the songs are political—there's not that many on *Babble* that are—it's just important to let people know that the information is there if they want it. It's like being an alternative media service."

"It's important as well to treat people with respect," adds Steve. "The problem with sloganeering is that you put yourself up onto a pedestal, and that's the last thing we want to do. Lord knows, we're all still young and our opinions are open to change. We want to be known as a band that can be talked to. If people come to us after the gigs and want to talk music or politics, we'll sit down and talk. That's very stimulating to us."

Nevertheless, in some ways That Petrol Emotion undersell themselves. They speak the often clichéd visual and verbal language of politically aware rock, because they live it. From their pictures and press, you wouldn't find much to distinguish them from doz-

ens of other would-be messiahs to have come out of the U.K. They love pop, rock, and its past and present. They get very excited when talking about post-punk groups like Josef K, Wire, and the Pop Group, or '70s soul acts like Bohannon, which shows good taste. Like everyone else, they plunder from the past. Like many other rock musicians, they can talk easily in the way the music press expects.

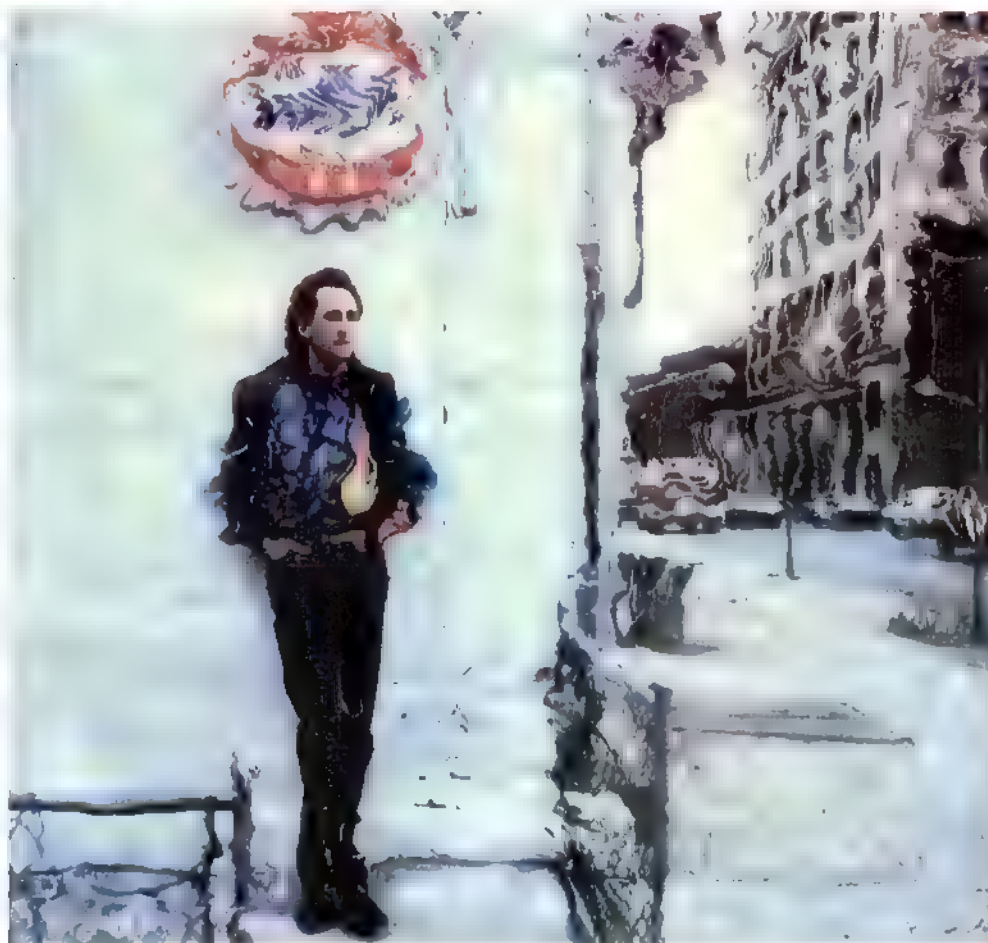
Contradiction number three: how come their sincerity doesn't translate into the usual sanctimonious bullshit? "I'm into knowledge," says Steve Mack, winningly. Both he and Reamann commit the unforgivable rock sin of reading: without obvious pretension they enthuse over current faves Milan Kundera, Gore Vidal, and Dos Passos. Their personal openness is matched by what appears to be a democratic way of working: they came together in the haphazard way that pop groups sometimes do (two members of the band had already won success with the Undertones), yet they are traditionalists. Their material goes through several "filtering processes" (concerts being one of them), but they embrace contemporary music and contemporary technology. A good example is their recent single "Big Decision," which mixes hip-hop beats with a chant—"agitare, educate, and organize"—lifted from and credited to a 1980 rap cut by Brother D. and Collective Effort. Another song, "Spin Cycle," features guitar work with an obvious debt to the democratic sparring of guitar bands like the Buzzcocks and Television. "We try to bounce off each other as much as possible," Reamann explains. "We love bands that sound like they work together without competing, without the need for one personality to emerge."

Steve Mack hates "macho rock crap," and gives That Petrol Emotion—none of them exactly jocks—the androgyny that is a powerful rock archetype. As a singer should, he embodies the group's possibilities. His skinny, stringy unselfconsciousness gives what could be a traditional rock format a blurred, sexy edge. And he thinks about sexual politics: "The dividing line between the sexes is one of the first things that has to go! You've got to tell boys that they can have feelings, and they can cry, and they can be camp every now and then. It doesn't mean they're trying to butt-fuck everybody. It just means that they're human and have some female hormones. The idea that anybody still has a role to play is unacceptable. There are no more roles to play."

That Petrol Emotion are currently on a roll. They're already outgrowing Britain, and America now beckons. They have no great plans except their beliefs, which they accept might be fragile. "We're trying to raise people's spirits as well as communicate certain ideas," says Reamann. "That's more important ultimately than the politics." Steve Mack adds: "I used to listen to a lot of old Isley Brothers stuff on the radio, songs like 'Fight the Power' and 'Livin' the Life,' and you realized they were getting people up on the dance floor and at the same time saying: 'Hey! Look around. Improve yourself. Start reading more.' That's what we want to do—get people dancing, invade their bones, and tell them to shape up. If you're going to do anything in your life, you've got to do it with the right attitude. If you sit in your bedroom thinking that life is miserable you're not going to accomplish anything."

PRESENTING..

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5 T O 1

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John Werner

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Grateful Dead *In the Dark* Arista

Let's face facts: The most noteworthy musical contribution made by the Grateful Dead during the last decade and a half was back in 1978 when the spirits, or maybe a careless late-night toss of the I-Ching, commanded them to perform at the foot of the Pyramids. With a history that goes back, in rock archeological terms, almost as far as those pyramids (average age of Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, and Mickey Hart: 42), and a wholly deserved reputation throughout the 1980s for being little more than a wind-up—make that toke-up—nostalgia machine, the Grateful Dead would seem about as relevant to the modern music scene as, maybe, the Lettermen. Maybe. To say, then, that one had anything more than severely diminished expectations for *In the Dark*, their first new studio record in better than seven years, would have been an understatement big enough to drive a truck through. Especially since, as any Dead aficionado knows, this is a band that can only harness its mystical powers on the concert stage, and only through the collective levitational energies of their

mini-legions of devoted followers. Before listening to this album, I'd have said that for the Grateful Dead to produce a good new LP in 1987 would be an accomplishment worthy of serious consideration as the eighth wonder of the world.

Roil over, Tutankhamen, and tell Cleopatra the news.

There's no denying that most of *In the Dark* sounds completely suspended in time, filled as it is with the emblematic symbols of '60s obsolescence that, at this point, only the Dead would dare haul around—Phil "A Wandering Bassist I" Lesh's meandering undercurrents, Bob "Drop That Beat in the Garbage Can" Weir's free-ranging rhythm guitar, Jerry "Captain Trips and Falls" Garcia's clockwork arpeggios, and those ever-lovin' one-for-each-side-of-the-brain double drums of Bill "Yin" Kreutzmann and Mickey "Yang" Hart. But what sets this record apart from the umpteen others that have been released in the generational lifetime since their last unarguably great record, 1970's *American Beauty*, is that this one has an if-I-knew-then-what-I-know-now perspective

about it that simply freezes you in your tracks. In fact, they sound so much like the GRATEFUL DEAD throughout this album that when keyboard player Brent Mydland—at age 34 the closest thing to a happenin' dude that this gaggle of cosmic geezers has to offer—gets to start off side two with a self-penned song called "Tons of Steel," you think you've walked into the wrong record. The band tries to play this straight-and-true song straight and true, and you keep thinking, "A discernible beat? Soulful vocals? Melodies? Who needs this? Anybody can do this!"

Luckily, this one song turns out to be a modernist aberration. Primarily—and by that one means the four songs written by Garcia and longtime Dead lyricist Robert Hunter—this album deals with aging and acceptance. And while these have always been recurrent themes for Hunter, the plain truth is that he sounds much wiser and less preachy as a bona-fide old fart than he did when he was just pretending to be one (c.f. "Ripple," "Saint Stephen," "Black Peter," etc.) all those years ago. The lead-off track, "Touch of Grey" ("Every sil-

ver lining's got a touch of grey"), neatly states the case: "Dawn is breaking everywhere/Light the candle, curse the glare/Draw the curtains, I don't care/It's alright/... Cows are giving kerosene/Kids can't read at seventeen/The personals are all obscene/But it's alright/I will get by/I will survive." The final song, "Black Muddy River," is simply a gorgeous ballad that recalls the Band, and thereby Dylan (with whom the Dead are on tour this summer); it wouldn't have appeared out of place at the end of *Workingman's Dead*, which is about as big a compliment as I could possibly give it. Again, the lyrics are splendid: "When it seems like the night will last forever/And there's nothing left to do but count the years/When the strings in my heart start to sliver/And stones fall from my eyes instead of tears/I will walk alone by the black muddy river/And dream me a dream of my own/I will walk alone by the black muddy river/And sing me a song of my own."

On these two tracks, as well as the other Garcia-Hunter compositions—the shuffle-bored blues, "When Push Comes to Shove," and the obligatory mid-tempo boogiefest, "West L.A. Fadeaway"—Garcia's guitar leads catch you almost unawares. Whether he's darting and weaving through the arrangement, as he does on "Touch of Grey," or pulling out some perfectly apropos big-note blues riffs on "West L.A. Fadeaway," Garcia keeps surprising you with an almost offhanded dexterity that can only be attributed to the fact that he's been doing this for the rock 'n' roll equivalent of a millenium. As have the rest of this oblivious crew. Fossils they may be in today's fast-paced, upwardly mobile, anti-drug society, but there sure seems to be life in those old skulls 'n' bones yet. Somewhere a Sphinx lies smiling. Far out.

—Billy Altman

Dead Milkmen
Bucky Fellini
Enigma

Thelonious Monster
Next Saturday Afternoon
Relativity

Hey, I've got a great sense of humor, really I do. Thing is, I kinda prefer my jokes to be funny, know what I mean? Most disgusting fact about all this indie/alternative pap is that so much of it tries to excuse its laziness, its fear of new ideas and passion and true audacity, by hiding behind some tepid trash-aesthetic concept of forced insignificance (what these dinks smugly refer to as "fun"). Since I've been asked to digest two new records that subscribe pretty exactly to this phenomenon, I figured I'd conduct one of those time-honored battles of the bands. The zillion-dollar question: Who's lamer, the Dead Milkmen or Thelonious Monster? Let's find out.

1. WHO'S GOT A MORE RIGID RHYTHM SECTION? The Dead Milkmen try fake reggae, fake funk, fake Eu-

rodisco, and fake cumbia, all of which come out hopelessly stiff. Thelonious Monster at least have some hope, I guess—they get by with this laid-back corporate-boogie rolling motion (it's "ironic," see), and hence don't need to swing. WINNER: Dead Milkmen.

2. WHO'S GOT MORE ATROCIOUS MUSICAL INFLUENCES? The Milkmen want to be the Dickies, or maybe Oingo Boingo. Thelonious want to be the Doobie Brothers, or maybe Styx circa *Equinox/Crystal Ball*. WINNER: Dead Milkmen.

3. WHOSE LED ZEPPELIN REFERENCES ARE LESS SUBTLE? The Milkmen sing part of "Dazed and Confused" in "Jellyfish Heaven." Thelonious have numbers called "Swan Song" and "Lookin' to the West," and in the latter they brag that they used to be big Zep and Kiss fans (yeah sure—I bet they liked Harry Chapin), but music means nothing to them now. WINNER: Thelonious Monster.

4. WHOSE NON-ZEPPELIN REFERENCES ARE LESS SUBTLE? The Milkmen perform an original called "I Am the Walrus," and insert sections of "Gloomy Sunday," "Ballroom Blitz," and "Sweet Jane" into other songs. Thelonious end "Tonight" with a scat from "Roadhouse Blues." WINNER: Dead

Milkmen.

5. WHOSE VOCALIST SOUNDS LIKE THE MORE WORTHLESS TV CHARACTER? The guy in the Milkmen whistles his S's like the gopher in those "Winnie the Pooh" cartoon specials; also, he likes to sing in goofy voices, such as through his nose. The guy in Thelonious Monster inhales his vowels like the dad on "Alf"; also, he sounds bored. I hate bored singers. WINNER: Thelonious Monster.

6. WHOSE SENSE OF PARANOIA TOWARD THE REAL WORLD IS MORE TIRED AND HYPOCRITICAL? The Milkmen make fun of health spas, K-Mart, Bruce Springsteen, Casey Kasem, Mormons, Eskimos, hillbillies, and Elvis fans, and in "Theme from Blood Orgy of the Atomic Fern" and "Instant Club Hit (You'll Dance to Anything)" they pretend that "art-fags" are more self-conscious and phony than they are. Thelonious Monster, I'm happy to report, don't give a damn. WINNER: Dead Milkmen, by a long shot.

7. WHOSE SENSE OF TEDIUM IS MORE TEDIUM? The Milkmen are tedious in an annoying way. Thelonious are tedious in a pleasant way. WINNER: Thelonious Monster.

8. WHICH BAND IS LESS IN TOUCH WITH ITS OWN SUPPOSED MUN-

DANITY? Thelonious do a dumb song about watching "The Odd Couple," rooting for Michael Jordan, going fishing, and paying bills. The Milkmen do a dumber one about eating at Tacoland. WINNER: Dead Milkmen.

9. WHOSE ATTEMPT AT A "WILD" FRAT-BLUES TRIBUTE SOUNDS WIMPIER? In Thelonious's "Pop Star," some creep yells "Roll it back!" and "Where's that guitar solo?" In the Milkmen's "Big Time Operator," some creep yells "Kill the motherfuckers!" and "Look out Stevie Ray Vaughan, look out Charlie Sexton!" WINNER: Thelonious Monster.

With all my barf-bags used up, I find that the Dead Milkmen's Bucky Fellini is indeed marginally more awful than Thelonious Monster's Next Saturday Afternoon. Worse luck next time, Thelonious.

—Chuck Eddy

Opposite page: Older and wiser, but still Dead: Garcia and company dart and weave through "Touch of Grey." Above: Thelonious Monster: pretty useless, but with practice and perseverance they might yet become truly abysmal.



Photo: Art Link

ABC
Alphabet City
Mercury

There's nothing like a near scrape with death to get the creative juices flowing. Martin Fry, the wordsmith and mouthpiece of ABC, reportedly recovered from a recent near-fatal bout with cancer, and the experience has apparently forced him to reconsider his past. The result is *Alphabet City*, a reconsolidation of ABC's strengths and the true successor to the group's first and finest record, *Lexicon of Love*.

After parting from producer Trevor Horn, who was chiefly responsible for *Lexicon of Love*'s groundbreaking largeness, ABC embraced much smaller pop genres—guitar rock on *Beauty Stab*, Latin hip hop on *How to Be a Zillionaire*—both to mixed and unsatisfying results. On *Alphabet City*, the group is now a duo: Fry and longtime songwriting collaborator Mark White. But while pairing down, Fry and White, together with ex-Chic bassist Bernard Edwards, bring back the Cinemascope soul that originally made ABC more than the sum of their tailors.

Alphabet City is also an acknowledgement of ABC's debt to black music. After the brief street atmospherics of "Avenue A," the LP shifts into full gear on its first single, "When Smokey Sings." More than just singing the praises of Motown's longest-lasting falsetto, "When Smokey Sings" celebrates that much-criticized goal of most black pop, escapism. "When Smokey Sings," explains Fry in song, "I forget everything." Other tracks explore black dance music's heightened romanticism from Fry's overstatedly dramatic but sublimely poetic perspective. You know you're getting Fry at his Fry-est on tracks with titles like "The Night You Mur-

dered Love," or "Rage and Then Regret." And just as "When Smokey Sings" hints at what Fry would like to forget—namely, his own mortality—songs such as "Archangel" and "Bad Blood" are ostensibly about love, but tackle themes like sickness, death, and rebirth under Fry's punning veneer.

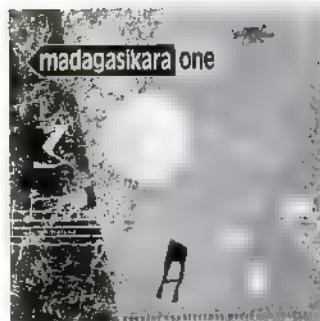
Musically, ABC have also taken a moodier turn. The disco strings that helped make *Lexicon of Love* such a turbulent joy are back, or at least sound that way. There's a blend, so rare these days, of conventional instruments and synthesizers, as if Fry and White decided to combine the soul, rock, and hip hop they previously served up separately. Edwards's contribution can be felt throughout, but is especially apparent on "The Night You Murdered Love," where funk textures provide an aptly urban backdrop for Fry's tortured wordplay. Not long ago, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis rejected an offer to produce ABC because they felt that Fry and White didn't need their services. *Alphabet City* proves how right they were.

—Barry Walters

Madagasikara One:
Current Traditional
Music of
Madagascar
GlobeStyle Records

Madagasikara Two:
Current Popular
Music of
Madagascar
GlobeStyle Records

Madagascar lies out in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa; turn right at



Mozambique and, if you don't drown, there you are. It's where the dodo was before the dodo wasn't; it's where much of the world's vanilla comes from; and its heat and lushness and separation from most of the known world make it God's laboratory, the place where He tries out different forms of animal and plant life before sending off for a patent. There are stories of man-eating plants, of roses that drip blood, of gourds big enough to provide a family with shelter from tropical rains. Several years ago, when Bruce Lee movies were shown for the first time in the capital city of Antananarivo, a group of excited and highly idealistic rebels decided to stage a coup armed only with black turtle-necks and upraised fists. They stormed the palace. They were shot. Governments are rarely as romantic as their people.

Late in the winter of 1985, Ben Mandelson (former guitarist with Magazine and Orchestra Jazira and de facto leader of 3 Mustaphas 3) and Roger Armstrong (a director of Ace Records and longtime Cramps devotee) set out for Madagascar to record local music. They arrived armed only with digital tape recorders

and good local contacts, and these two albums (two more will follow later this year) are their hard-won and fascinating results. For one thing, the distinction between traditional and popular music is fairly arbitrary and blurred: the popular and dance musics are firmly rooted in ancient ritual, while the traditional music is played with a verve and style that make it feel contemporary.

Madagasikara One: Current Traditional Music is the more unusual of the two records. Where the popular music refers, however obliquely, to reggae, South African mbaqanga music, and to Zairean disco, the more traditional music is based around accordions, valihas (a kind of zither), and flutes, and it doesn't sound like anything else in the world. A blind accordionist spits on the ground and begins a carnivallike round, joined by the sly calls of a wooden flautist trying to escape the dance and to join the dance. Another player, David Andriamamonjy, draws stately and heartbreaking waltzes out of his accordion, like Nino Rota at his most fiercely sentimental or Stephen Foster played underwater. From behind soft rattling percussion, the boom-bam of a parade drum, and the harp strings of the valiha, a group of children begin to chant a cautionary tale about a white couple who miraculously give birth to a black baby.

Madagasikara Two: Current Popular Music features dance music from one of those perfect discos on the moon, where beats intertwine effortlessly and the grooves are so deep and so supple they can turn on a dime and still give you back change.

As Mandelson points out in the liner notes, most of these dances have the same underlying 12/8 triplet rhythm—the same rhythm used throughout the island, but danced at different speeds depending on the location: on the high plateau the people work hard, so the music must be slow to sweeten them; but in the coastal regions life is easier, so they dance faster and have more time for art.

Bands like Les Smockers and Tarika Sammy turn in tracks that would easily fit on *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto*, while Rossy veers between a deep reggae-driven rocker and what can only be termed Malagasy folk-rock, performing a song that sounds suspiciously like Tom Paxton's "The Last Thing on My Mind."

These bands were apparently thrilled at the prospect of being heard outside their own territory, wanting desperately to be part of the world's musical food-chain. When Mandelson was stricken with a nasty case of stomach cramps at a local TV studio and was camped out in the lavatory, local bands, hearing of his presence, stormed into the toilet and auditioned for him as he sat in his stall.

What do you do with ambition like that? What do you do with a world like this? Record it, buy it, find it, hear it.

—Brian Cullman

Martin Fry of ABC.



London Features



Duane Eddy
Duane Eddy
Capitol

With the name Ennio Morricone dropping from every hip lip, may I say a few words for a primal source of the Big M's sound, Duane Eddy? Years before Morricone carved his name in mock-desert sands with his classic scores for Sergio Leone westerns like *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* and *For a Few Dollars More*, Duane Eddy unleashed the guitar sound that would become a Morricone/Leone trademark. In 1958, Eddy's "Movin' 'n' Groovin'" burst forth from a homemade recording studio in Phoenix, Arizona (a real desert), the first of nearly 20 evocatively titled chart hits including "Cannon Ball," "Ramrod," "The Lonely One," and "40 Miles of Bad Road."

Time marches on, but on this, his first new album in a decade, Duane Eddy's sound is a veritable Rock of Gibraltar: a deep, slow vibrato plucked from three tuned-down bass strings. Now as then, his music is only as effective as the melodies he's twanging and (to a lesser extent) the arrangements surrounding him. But on this record, Eddy comes up aces at least half the time.

Duane Eddy begins inauspiciously with "Kickin' Asphalt," a basic boogie riff passed politely around from Eddy to James Burton, John Fogerty, and Steve Cropper without incendiary effect. The Gary Glitterish "Rockestra Theme"



raises the energy level but nearly swamps our man in a tide of synths, horns, and mindless chanting.

But with the Jeff Lynne-produced "Theme for Something Really Important," we're back on solid ground: the Painted Desert at dawn, the Grand Canyon at sunset, or maybe just the best Marlboro commercial in two decades. (Even the title's up to Duane's past standards.) Equally good is "Blue City," one of those languidly gorgeous Ry Cooder movie themes à la *Alamo Bay* or *Paris, Texas*, with Cooder's acoustic guitar and Duane's basso profundo delicately entwined. These two are my recurrent faves, closely followed by Lynne's "The Trembler" and the romping "Rockabilly Holiday" (with Jeff's Scotty Moore-ish riffs goosing Duane up the scale).

—Andy Schwartz

MASON RUFFNER *Gypsy Blood* IT RUNS HOT.

"One of the year's best records... If Sam Phillips were starting Sun Records today, he'd be looking for someone who sounds like Mason Ruffner."

—David Hinckley/*Rolling Stone*

"Full-bodied, blues-flavored rock songs, delivered in a rugged, insinuating drawl reminiscent of both Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan. Mr. Ruffner's muscular, churning guitar work also echoes the influence of Mr. Hendrix as filtered through a Southern blues tradition."

—Stephen Holden/*The New York Times*

Critics everywhere agree Mason Ruffner is the hottest thing to come out of the Bayou since Louisiana lightning! "Gypsy Blood" will tell you why.

MASON RUFFNER. "GYPSY BLOOD."

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Material

Whitney Houston
Whitney
Arista

Diana Ross
Red Hot Rhythm and Blues
RCA

Some divas are bigger than others. In Whitney Houston's case, some divas' mothers are bigger than other divas' mothers. Since Whitney's mom is Cissy Houston, once a member of '60s girl group the Sweet Inspirations, and Dionne Warwick is a cousin, divatude runs in her blood. As a result, screaming transcendent-diva-screams presents no challenge for Whitney. Whitney's way of outdoing other divas is outselling them. Having done that with her debut, the only thing left for this diva to do is move more units than Miss Jackson's big bro. To do this on *Whitney*, the follow-up to *Whitney Houston*, Cissy's daughter gets the aural equivalent of Michael's nose-job.

Calling it formulaic, or crossover, or just too whitey would be an understatement. *Whitney* is the most calculated, mercenary disc ever to be dumped on an all-too-willing public. But really, could we expect anything more?

Every *Whitney* track clones somebody's mega-platinum, usually her own. "How Will I Know" here becomes "I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)." "Greatest Love of All" bears



wanted to do an entire Ross LP for years, but she'd rather do pleasant duds like this one with pampering producers. Some divas, no matter how big they or their hairdos get, can be quite small.

Here's a dozen more reasons to buy something else: Miki Howard, Shirley Jones, Melba Moore, Phyllis Hyman, Tawatha, Regina Belle, Jocelyn Brown, Peggi Blu, Stephanie Mills, Janet Jackson, Jody Watley, Anita Baker.

—Barry Walters

Shelleyan Orphan
Helleborine
(CBS)

Like their English godfathers, Donovan and the Incredible String Band, Shelleyan Orphan carefully walk the line between wispy and wimpy pop. Caroline Crawley and Jemaur Tayle, the songwriter/singers who make up the Brit duo, favor tragi-romantic lyrics shaped around classic melodies and harmonies. Although most of the words scatter indecipherably over the string and woodwind arrangements, the overall tone is one of upbeat melancholy, not unlike the finer moments of a Claudine Longet album.

This attitude of optimistic sadness is fashionable among New Wave artists (Berntholer, Suzanne Vega, Natalie Merchant), who merge introspective folk poetry with traditional pop rhythms. But the stark minimalism of *Helleborine* (no bass guitar, drums, or electric guitar) helps Shelleyan achieve a unique niche among their peers.

Songs like "Jeremiah Stukeley" and "Southern Bess (A Field Holler)" feature sweet scat-like vocals over minimal woodwind and string ensemble work. "Blue Black Grape" has a trancelike chorus (Crawley and Tayle have a Sonny and Cher vocal inseparability) and an inspired oboe solo. "Seeking Bread and Heaven" is a mysterious love song with enigmatic lyrics ("Suddenly love is drenched in blind, crucified and blind..."). Thanks to the potent compositions and Haydn Bendall's restrained production, *Helleborine* transcends its occasional lapses into poetic affectation. Don't expect any monster club mixes or Top 40 play, but Shelleyan Orphan is a farsighted hint at the potential of softhearted pop music in the '80s.

—Rich Stim

Shelleyan Orphan..... *Helleborine*



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twins: "Didn't We Almost Have It All" and "You're Still My Man." "Just the Lonely Talking Again" is one of the nicer cuts because it sounds like Anita Baker. "For the Love of You" is the other good one because it's the quintessential Isley Brothers slow jam reinterpreted to sound like Anita Baker.

Diana Ross also follows the Baker cookbook on *Red Hot Rhythm and Blues*. Although Baker is throaty and Ross has never sounded breathier, *RHRAB*'s gimmick is the gimmickless approach Baker brought back to pop soul. Nine of ten tracks are produced by Tom Dowd, who worked dozens of Atlantic classics by Aretha and other R&B legends, as well as cuts for Kenny Rogers. The usual synth-slickness is kept to a minimum, but so is individual expression. There's a Leonard Cohen credit on "Summertime," and a Simply Red cover, "Shine," but they might as well be Whitney tunes. These and others are pretty, but inconsequential too.

The one possible exception is "It's Hard for Me to Say," produced by Ross acolyte Luther Vandross. This quiet-storm swayer in the understated Vandross tradition puts into relief the disparity between what Ross is still capable of and what she usually limits herself to. Before leaving Motown, Ross turned out two exceptional albums: *The Boss* in 1979 with Ashford and Simpson, and *Diana* in 1980 with Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards. The reason why Ross hasn't since made more than the occasional good single is that she now demands her own dull way. Vandross has

SPIN-OFFS



CARLOS ALOMAR *Dream Generator* (Private Music) On his own, sans Bowie, Alomar uses his guitar and studio toys to track the essence of different sleep stages. Traces of Japanese intrigue seep through in this LP's prettiest moments, but it is Alomar's articulate guitar work that shapes "R.E.M.," "Insomniac," "Global Alfa 9," et al. *Dream Generator* is an accurate reflection of our after-hours visions but, like dreams, it can also be abrasive and indecipherable. As a solo statement from a man whose talents have always served another man's fame, this expression is too intense, too eager. —K.J.D.

ERIC B. AND RAKIM *Paid in Full* (4th & B'way) On the title cut, rapper Rakim and DJ Eric B. name their booking agency, their agent, their record company, and their management company. Which goes to show, just as clearly as the appearance of Run-D.M.C. and L.L. Cool J in the pop Top 10, how dramatically rap has changed in the last few years. More subtly radical are Rakim's inviolated rhymes, 8½ to the bar, and the way the two of them use their digital sampler to usurp the JB's as their backing band. Not so subtle, but brilliant anyway, is Rakim's food fest, "You thought I was a doughnut/You tried to glaze me." Great record. —J.L.

PETE BARDENS *Seen One Earth* (Capitol) Jan Hammer/"Miami Vice"-like background music from the one-time Camel musician. As a kid, I once fell

asleep while leaning on the stage at a Camel show. It's reassuring to know I haven't grown up. —K.M.

THE CALL *Into the Woods* (Elektra) With their percussion-heavy drones, morbid lyrics, and melodic bass parts, this Bay Area quartet often sounds like the American New Order. The principal difference is songwriter Michael Been's singing, which is as melodramatic as New Order's is apathetic. Accordingly, the best moments on this LP rely less on the sound they've borrowed from Anglo bands than the passion they've learned from *Nebraska*. —L.K.

KID CREOLE & THE COCONUTS *I, Too, Have Seen the Woods* (Warner) August Darnell's musical travelogues can easily be mistaken for exotic novelties or, worse, mere dilettantism. The best evidence they're not is on side one where, skipping from soca to flamenco to salsa, Darnell showcases some of his finest singing and writing. The next best evidence is side two, whose more conventional soul ballads and funk workouts sound tame by comparison. —J.T.

GO-BETWEENS *Tallulah* (Big Time) This is wholeheartedly amiable pop fare: hummable tunes, propulsive, playlist-ready beats, conventionally good playing. Nothing messy, nothing weird. Robert Forster and Grant McLellan's self-consciously intelligent and clever songwriting, particularly on songs like "The Clarke Sisters" and "I Just Get Caught

Out," feels like they agonized over it for hours: the lyrics are crammed full of superfluous wordplay and pointedly poignant imagery. In a better world, mainstream pop would never sink lower than this. In the real world, *Tallulah's* yupster-friendly indie-pop doesn't offer enough of an alternative to mean much. —H.W.

DINOSAUR *You're Living All Over Me* (SST) Ah, to be young and dumb and in love with volume and Buffalo Springfield. And maybe even smart in the bargain. Dinosaur can crunch and they can meander, but they're best when they do both at the same time. Then they're really, really good. —J.L.

THE OUTFIELD *Bangin'* (Columbia) Whenever England grows a few hairdos that simply won't do, they ship them over here and trick us into thinking they're red-blooded Yanks. The Outfield, the latest in a long line of poor man's Police outfits, prove once again that America has no monopoly on platinum-rock monotony. —B.W.

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY & DUB SYNDICATE *Time Bomb X De Devil Dead* (On-U Sound) State of reggae being what it is, the first mad genius of dub had to travel to England to record with ranking upstart Adrian Sherwood. The

result is an album of uncompromising bile, mixological wit, and better songs than Perry has come up with in a dog's age. —J.L.

PRINCESS *All for Love* (PolyGram) On the opening cut, Britain's breathy black dance diva thinks she's so fierce she's got a cure for male homosexuality—herself. The rest of this exceptionally consistent LP comes close to making her argument a convincing one. Close, Princess, but no cigar. —B.W.

PETE WYLIE *Sinful* (Virgin) As a solo artist, Wylie suffers from the same grandiose ambitions as his former band, Wah! A rock anthemist with a limited gift for melody and no grasp of rhythm, he inflates these rather ordinary songs with every studio device imaginable. Unfortunately, he doesn't have much imagination, either. —J.T.

JOE WALSH *Got Any Gum?* (Warner) Walsh's guitar playing on *Hotel California* defined a key moment in mid-'70s rock; with his 1978 hit, "Life's Been Good to Me," he redefined himself as that moment's key apologist. On this LP, titles like "Malibu," "Fun," and "Got Any Gum?" promise more of the same. Only this time around the music ratifies rather than satirizes his sense of disengagement. —E.K.



Above left: Australia's Go-Betweens, an amiable, yupster-friendly pop band. Left: August Darnell, better known as Kid Creole.

George Dubose/London Features

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SINGLES

Column by John Leland

D.J. Polo & Kool G. Rapp: "Rikers Island" (Cold Chillin')

Spoonie Gee: "The Godfather" (Tuff City)

Give it up or turn it loose: rap is the only music that talks real relevant shit. Take these two slices o' life, both produced by Marley Marl. "Rikers Island" is a primer on the prison; a friend who spends time on the rock says Polo's details are dead on. Sounds almost anachronistic, like a Last Poets nod, but Polo's presumed alienation pushes him to ambivalence rather than resistance: "If you ever hear a cop say you're under arrest/Go out like a trooper, stick out your chest." "The Godfather" is a primer on how cool Spoonie Gee is, and if there's a better new rap record, I haven't heard it. You got so many James Brown samples and approximations in the mix that "The Godfather," like Eric B. and Rakim's "I Know You Got Soul," could stand proud as a straight funk record. Ten years from now we'll hear this and bemoan the subsequent decline of civilization. (Cold Chillin', 1966 Broadway, NYC 10023; Tuff City, 46-31 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, NY 11101)

Mantronix: "Scream" (Sleeping Bag)

The Art of Noise: "Dragnet" (Chrysalis)

The beatbox killed the DJ, and no one works the machine much better than Mantronix's musical half, Mantronik. But in New York, B-boys don't give them the time of day. Could be 'cause the duo's dense electronic collages have more in common with a way, way hipper Dead or Alive than with Run-D.M.C.: this layered shuffle thing is clean enough to eat off. Or could be 'cause Mantronik understands too well hip-hop deconstruction, his peers' general indifference to which has kept the music from chasing its self-referential tail. You can probably blame the English press for feeding him the apple; and if you've got a heart, you can have faith in him not to become the Art of Noise. Who on the "Dragnet" theme sound real hip and real referential but nowhere near as ambitious or funky. Even when remixer Arthur Baker cuts in the "Cavern" (or "White Lines") bass line. Chase that tail. (Sleeping Bag, 1974 Broadway, NYC 10023)



I know you are but who am I?: Pee-wee's unaltered ego, Paul Reubens.

King Tee: "Paybacks a Mutha" (Techno Hop)

Ice-T: "Make It Funky" b/w "Sex" (Sire)

The digital sampling device killed the beatbox. Since Eric B.'s "Eric B. Is President" ruled last summer, most hip-hop records are built on samples from old R & B records. These two, both from L.A. but both very good, are built on James Brown snatches. Which, given the history of the music, is as it should be. King Tee's in the killer jam, though it may be a bad sign that it's at its best when the samples outweigh the original stuff. "Make It Funky," in the tradition of the Richie Family's "Best Disco in Town," digitally bites Boogie Down Productions' "South Bronx," M.C. Shan's "The Bridge," the Uptown Crew's "Uptown Is Kickin' It," and Cutmaster D.C.'s "Brooklyn's in the House," in ad-

dition to a whole lotta James Brown. Fun stuff, coming from L.A. (Techno Hop, 15514 Paramount Blvd., Paramount, CA 90723)

Pee-wee Herman: "Surfin' Bird" (Columbia)

This manic pop thrill adds more to the Pee-wee canon than to the legend of the Trashmen's classic. It's pretty great, pretty dumb, and more like television than music: with no resonance, it makes sense only as foreground. And as a vicarious trip to frenzy, it's more isolating than unifying. Just like TV.

The Lorries: "Crawling Mantra" EP (Homestead)

The former Ian Curtis tribute-band Red Lorry Yellow Lorry shortened its name, dropped some pretensions, and got a

little funky. Sound is still a swirl of distorted guitars, but the bass is now more propulsive than ornamental, and the beats almost swing. Could do without the "calling Mister Midnight" Iggy paraphrase on "All the Same" (though a band's gotta have ambitions), and I still feel that in reducing themselves to coloration, these gloom bands deny the amateurism that could redeem them. But on their way to possible redemption, the Lorries have picked up a couple bona-fide hooks. And that's a start. (Box 570, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-0570)

Chuck Stanley: "Jammin' to the Bells" (Def Jam)

The love man goes gangster. Not with a novelty rap, like Juice Jones, but with a hard beat and a voyeur's insouciance. This is crunching black pop without the upward mobility; Stanley's sexual fantasy (jammin' to the bells indeed) has nothing to do with promises of fulfillment and little to do with the song's putative love object. It's about desire, triggered rather than motivated, and for that, the song's total macho tone tells more than it might want to. This is music to help men dig their lust, not to share it. It's a new day, so let a man come in and do the popcorn.

Stan Campbell: "Years Go By" b/w "Seven More Days" (WEA import)

Takes a record like this effortless number from the former singer in the Special A.K.A. to show what a simple thing good pop is. A-side constructs a high-stepper out of next to nothing; B-side builds a reggae-ish lament out of even less. It's only by dint of Campbell's supple grace that these escape blandness; but these days, that grace is cause for celebration.

Big Black: "Headache" EP (Touch and Go)

Big Black: "Heartbeat" b/w "Things to Do Today" & "I Can't Believe" (Touch and Go)

Giant, wailing piece of aggressive noise for people who think it's fun not to have fun. Which I'll admit sometimes includes me. Despite their smellable envy of the more democratic Big Stick, with each record Big Black accrues more of the self-righteous zeal of the last man. There's a pervasive sense of audience abuse (read: messianic condescension) here—"Things to Do Today" is a list of banal goals—but there's also a heartier sense of humor than Albini has mustered in the past. And as if to prove they're not Wire disciples (especially not the new Wire), they slash up "Heartbeat" but good. But shit, I always thought they was Killing Joke disciples. (Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625)

UNDERGROUND



Laura Levine

From an isolated Texas studio to the forgotten fringes of Boston, the past continues to resurface. And we're not talking CD reissues here.

Column by
Byron Coley

I dunno if you remember it or not, but the finest thing that SPIN did in its premier issue was to provide coverage of America's most consistently overlooked musical genius: a gentleman known simply as **Jandek**. Now, with his fourteenth album available to all and sundry, it's time to take another peek at this master of long-tongue-sublimity.

Almost nothing is known of Jandek the man, so it's tougher than tubes to present elucidating facts that place his musical whaisis in context. Even if you had a detailed bio of the guy, it wouldn't mean that you'd be able to place his music inside of some logical tradition. Recorded at home or in a primitively stark studio, his recordings often consist of unaccompanied acoustic guitar and voice that come from somewhere deep within a troubled soul. There are several variations on this presentational format, but Jandek's voice and playing exude such a strong stink of "otherness," that I have a tendency to think of him as being alone whether there's evidence of others' presence on his records or not.

The albums are also visually unique. While a few have color covers, the majority sport out-of-focus B&W shots of a guy (presumably Jandek) and/or objects he has around the house. The records are all released on

his own label, Corwood (P.O. Box 15375, Houston, TX 77020), and while a few extremely hip record stores have been known to stock them, you're best off ordering direct. Single copies are \$6. Here's a rundown of what exists:

Ready for the House (1978). Color cover shows a chair sitting alone in a room. The album is full of disjointed amelodic blues that bump through your head like a truckload of manic depressives singing the Velvet's "Pale Blue Eyes."

Six and Six (1981). The B&W photo-booth snap on the cover makes our man look like a '40s version of Thurston Moore between stints on a chain gang. The acoustic-guitar style has evolved a new circular motion here. Notes get picked like scabs and picked again. The mood is still down in a dump.

Later On (1981). B&W cover photo on this shows what looks like a librarian who has just come upon the corpses of a murdered family in the children's-book aisle. Jandek begins to add some harmonica here, creating a Martian-bluesy feel.

Chair Beside a Window (1982). Very blurry B&W cover portrait of our man is a stunner, and the song "European Jewel" (which was begun on the first album) gets finished here amidst frenzied bursts of electric

guitar and discordant, scattershot drumming. The vocals also begin to take on a pushed-over-the-top cadence reminiscent of Syd Barrett's singing near the end of "Astronomy Domine." A woman's voice also makes an appearance on the song "Nancy Sings"—a sorta hymn to end all droughts.

Living in a Moon So Blue (undated). B&W pic of an acoustic guitar against a wall. The mood has swung down again and this is all solo, all acoustic. The strumming is real hard, though, and the harmonica playing is as recklessly jammed-up as '65 Dylan.

Staring at the Cellophane (undated). A B&W pic of the same guitar as on previous LP, now shown to be sitting near a closet. This continues the solo-acoustic downslide, but shows off a new attention to throat-motion (I mean, there's actual "singing.")

Your Turn to Fall (1983). Cover has a color photo of a desk and the rec is filled with more solo acoustic ouch. If anything, this one's even more introverted than its predecessors.

The Rocks Crumble (1983). B&W photo of a drum kit on the cover. This record offers three more versions of the epic root-search anthem "European Jewel." The guitar is electric throughout and drums are overdubbed to provide a "full" combo sound. Pretty wild.

Interstellar Discussion (1984). Color close-up of the drum kit decks this one. The album begins with Jandek's most insane frenzy of post-tongue yammering voice/drum/guitar reetness. It settles down into more aching acousticism, but the damage is done.

Nine Thirty (1985). B&W pic of our man in a chair outside his house. Very similar to *Your Turn to Fall*, this one sounds like a man who has climbed inside his corpse to serenade his withered vital organs. Again though, the guitar style seems to be moving forward into a realm where melodies coalesce.

Foreign Keys (1985). B&W pic of our man standing in a partially closed doorway. An astounding all-electric album on which Jandek is joined by an unidentified female vocalist (who sounds like a young Tracy Nelson on muscle relaxants) for the course of the second side. "Ballad of Robert" is lyrically notable here, but the key selection is "River to Madrid"—a kinda follow-up to "European Jewel" that features some absolutely shrieking duet passages.

Telegraph Melts (1986). B&W shot of our man squatting in the garden. An all-electric outing with drums, harmonica, passionate confusion, and some female vocals. This one throbs with tribal-hunch-mysticism, and when the groove really locks, I'd swear

it's the best recreation of SF Ballroom-era acid-rock I've ever heard. This includes the first version of the classic "You Painted Your Teeth"—a song that tells such a good story it must be true.

Follow Your Footsteps (1986). A fairly clear B&W torso shot of our man with his electric guitar. This LP is part acoustic wandering, part electro-drummed hum. The overall feel is pretty languid and the song "Preacher" can qualify as a bonafide blues number. Also interesting is the mention of "Caledonia Mahogany's elbows," which means that Jandek is familiar with the early works of the Mothers and perhaps not as purely naïf as sometimes suspected.

Modern Dances (1987). B&W photo of our man shirtless, standing near a brick wall. This is the latest and features some amazing duets between Jandek and the female singer. Especially wild are her lyrical improvisations about the comparative worth of his drumming ability. Bodes damn well for future releases.

Well, that's it. A Tom Thumb-size guide to the collected works of an underground figure you'll haveta know about if you're gonna have any chance at scoring well on the quiz that'll determine my replacement. Don't delay, buy a box today.

As much as I sorta like Boston (the city), I'd never claim it was the best town for an un-straight-ahead band to call home. As ugly proof of this maxim, I offer the *Girls*. The *Girls*

were a quartet of significant beauty, weirdness, and power. They existed in the late '70s and were of almost no use to anybody around here. They did one single for David Thomas's Cleveland-based Hearthan Records, but it's only eight years after their demise that they've actually got an album released locally: *Girls Reunion* (Brasch Music, P.O. Box 99, Belmont, MA 02179). Actually recorded while the band was still extant, this assembles the A-side of their single "Jeffrey I Hear You," with a dozen other nuggets of their wildly primitive art rock. Developing along lines parallel to NYC's No Wave bands, the *Girls* used tons of onerous noise-heft, but their "thing" was more goofily humorous than anything else. Mark Dagley's guitar stroked through the air like a punk-tuna upchucking Ken-L Ration. David Held sang like a transvestite football player with his biggest appendage caught in a revolving door, and they were possibly the best band that Boston ever produced. There's room for argument here, but the goods delivered on this album make me remember how amazingly wild these jokers could be. Released as a companion to the *Girls' LP* is an album by *Shut Up* called *Hell in a Handbasket*. *Shut Up*, founded by the earlier band's keyboard player, Robin Amos, were (and sort of still are) heirs to the *Girls'* tradition. *Shut Up* were another group erroneously ignored in spades by Boston's goobers, although with their less-aggressive stance it's a bit easy

to understand why this was so. Robin's vocals tend to sound like the cries of a sedated infant, which is great when Glenn Jones' guitar is blowing chunks of 'delicized noise, but it's not as hot when *Shut Up's* going through more formally kinky paces. Like Zoogz Rift, these guys sometimes squeak when they ought to plow. But they plow enough to hold my attention like a hot cup of chowder. And they could hold yours too.



B. C. Kogon

You probably don't realize it, but there's a whole world of happening homemade early-mid-'70s albums out there. While most numbtars were content to drink aural swill from cups marked *Eagles*, *Ronstadt*, and *Elton*, there were a few others who decided to cough up their own lungfuls of diseased and gritty chaw. Unfortunately, this was long before the so-called "independent label revolution," which meant that there was no way to distribute these records. Those few copies that didn't succumb to basement mildew were sold at church sales and the best ones are worth a pretty penny today. One of the coolest of these leftfield homeruns is *Jungle Rot* by Baltimore's *George Brigman*. Filled with fuzz-scuzz Hendrix/Asheton guitar-howl and thud-like rhythms, the LP's a consistent cow-pleaser at the Coley digs. Unlike most of his peers, however, George didn't hang up his shoes after the album dissolved of its own accord in 1975. He soldiered on, releasing a couple more things himself and then doing an EP for the Bonafide label. And now, you lucky clueless dog, Resonance Records (P.O. Box 213, 1740 AE Schagen, Netherlands) has just issued a great album called *Human Scrawl Vagabond* that collects some of the best bits from these recent releases and also burps up a half-dozen new puffs of loud, loud smoke. I sorta like George best when he heists riffs I know and plows 'em into string-piles of his own invention. He's assisted by a variety of guys who sound like

they spent more time hanging out in the woods than they did hanging out in bars and there's a heavy-duty munge-perfection to their playing. Cup!

New York saxophonist *John Zorn* has been pretty damn ubiquitous lately. It seems like he plays on every third record in the "Other Music" bin at most of the record stores I frequent and I'll bet that even my mom has an album or two he plays on. On the new double record set released under his name on the Swiss Hat Art label (dist. NMDS, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012) he doesn't play one note. All he does is wave his hands a bunch. The set's called *Cobra* and the actual players are New York gronk hot-shots like Arto Lindsay, Elliott Sharp, Christian Marclay, Wayne Horvitz, and Zeena Parkins. And what this gang is doing is following the directions of Commander Zorn as he leads them through some paces suggested to him by a war game. The resulting suites (one live at Rensselaer in October '85; one in the studio seven months later) consist of sequential clusters of musician-warriors battling each other's expectations at every possible turn. Polka death-marches run into vocal blit-outs that sound like they're emanating from Eastern European bomb shelters that run into calliope music from Heck that runs into "Theme from the Munsters" that runs into pliantly zoning guitar AND IT ALL HAPPENS IN THE SPACE OF A FEW MERE MINUTES. In a sense, it's a bit like Zappa's old live thing where he'd get band members to do this or play that by shaking his leg a certain way. Except here the options are left up to the musicians. And the musicians are fully up to the challenge. Surely you are too.

I love garbage as much as the next guy. I like making it. I like taking it out. But most of all, I love playing it on my stereo. And when I wanna hear some garbage that can wrestle every bug-dick in the neighborhood, I reach for wax by the *Cattle*. Consequently, I was happier than a boneless crow when the *Cattle* released a new EP called *Escalator Stampede* (Addled Records, P.O. Box 40421, Tuscon, AZ 85717). Its four songs are the sorta trash that makes my head feel soft and friendly for days. Elements of fuzz-punk, surf-raunch, pogo-grunt, and post-country-beer-noise mesh into a mess so big you'll need two throats to gulp it. This Arizona trio has the woof and oomph to scare the flies off your corpse. They are a brakeless train highballing through your family's cactus patch and if you don't grab that caboose you're gonna feel like one stupid little shaver when somebody asks to take a look at your records. "You don't have the *Cattle* EP," they'll bawl. "You asshole!"

Yeah, so anyway, love Jah and live. Also send me all your records c/o Forced Exposure, P.O. Box 1611, Waltham, MA 02254.



B. C. Kogon

Opposite: The ubiquitous John Zorn. Above: Jandek gives new meaning to the term photo-album. Above right: *Shut Up's* Gilda Brasch and Robin Amos.

MAN ON FIRE

John Cougar Mellencamp
was a wise guy once. He's older
than that now.

Article by Bob Guccione, Jr.

*He wanted love
With no involvement
So he chased the wind
That's all his silly life required
And the days of vanity
Went on forever
And he saw his days burn up
Like paper in fire*

—“Paper in Fire”

He is sitting on the couch against the back wall of the studio, his right leg crossed over his left, intent on a rock dangling on a string he has coiled around his right hand. He jerks the string just so, so that the rock jumps and falls to tie a knot in the string. After a couple of attempts the rock jerks and falls right and there is the knot. “There,” he announces softly. His record is 13 in a row. He plays with this even more than he chain smokes when he's in the studio and not actually working.

His voice is rich and sharp, like a violin. Wearing a white T-shirt, jeans, and boots, he is younger and smaller looking than in his photographs. His wavy, dark brown hair falls to his shoulders and although he doesn't part it in the middle, it falls away to either side of his face. The face has a boyish, sensual confidence. The eyes are intelligent and impatient. When he smiles, he looks older.

We are listening to his new album, *The Lonesome Jubilee*, on the studio monitors. He likes it played loud and it pounds into you but the music is exquisitely distinct. The opening chords of “Paper in Fire,” the first track and first single, are pierced by the unusual sound of a violin, hammer dulcimer, and accordion tracked on top of one an-

other, whirling like a musical firework into the sky. The guitar and drums recover the beat, then another firework takes off. Once again the guitar and drums take over, unhurried, steady, until the sudden trill of a dulcimer freezes them and then he is singing in that voice that always seems to be running in place but which you can never catch.

“Paper in Fire” is perhaps an epiphanous song; *The Lonesome Jubilee* is almost certainly an epiphanous album. The writing is probably his best ever—he calls it his most honest—and the music is bolder and more experimental than anything he's done before.

There are no safety nets under the album. It's pure rock 'n' roll, but it's walking, not running. It's going by you slow enough to see all its blemishes, slow enough for you to throw something at if you want. Scarecrow is politically outspoken and generally serious, but contains tracks like “R.O.C.K. in the USA” and “The Kind of Fella I Am” that buoy it, like cork. They are safe and unrevealing. But there is no cork on *The Lonesome Jubilee*. Even the two best pop songs, “Cherry Bomb” and “Rooty Toot Toot,” are personal and uncompromisingly honest. “Down and Out in Paradise” is a series of imaginary letters to the President, sung, almost spat, in restrained anger. “Check It Out,” “The Real Life,” and “Hard Times for an Honest Man” deal with slice-of-life problems. Completely unglamorous, they are poetic, moving, and beautiful songs. “Empty Hands” (co-written with George Green) is a mournful wail of blue-collar hardship. The singing is not bitter, as if he knew bitterness would distract, but it perfectly articulates the common, simple, stagnant despair. And when he sings “Without hope, without love, you've got nothing but pain/just makes a man not give a damn,” he penetrates the surface of social dilemma and finds its sad soul, the way Woody Guthrie, John Stein-

beck, and Edward Hopper have, but Bruce Springsteen and Norman Rockwell haven't.

“We Are the People” is a simple declaration of solidarity with the oppressed. He is standing up and being counted. “Cherry Bomb,” “Check It Out,” and especially “Rooty Toot Toot” celebrate the understanding that comes with maturity. “Hot Dogs and Hamburgers” is about a guy who picks up a pretty Indian hitchhiker and tries to kiss her. She jumps into the back seat and tells him off for “trying to get something for nothing, like the Pilgrims in the olden days”; for the rest of the song, the singer is ashamed of himself and his race. This album is about growing up.

When “Paper in Fire” ended in the studio, I made a remark about the verse quoted at the top of this article. It was an epiphany to me, if not to him. He looked up from his rock on its string and said, “If you can explain this album to me, please do, because I don't think I know what my own damn album's about.” Four songs later, on “Cherry Bomb,” he sings: “Seventeen has turned thirty-five/I'm surprised that we're still living.”

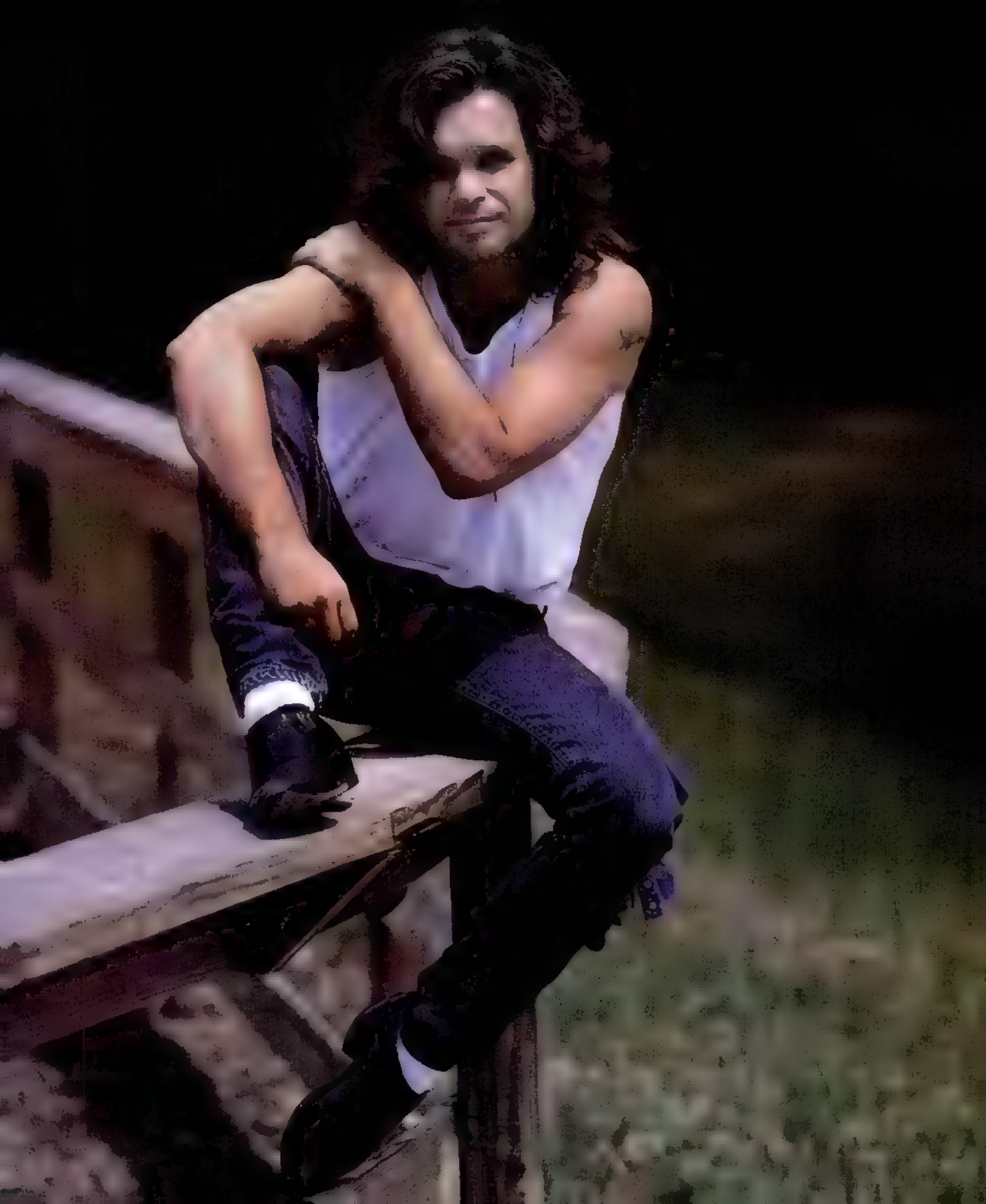
“Seventeen turns thirty-five—that's your album,” I say. The man on the couch considers that.

2.

John Cougar Mellencamp is 35 years old, the father of three daughters, and has been married every day of his life since he was 17—he was already living with his second wife, Vicky, when his divorce from Priscilla came through.

He was born on October 7, 1951, in Seymour, Indiana, a gray town in a green state, and grew up through a fairly nondescript childhood and adolescence during which time he professed he wanted to be a singer, boxer, or football player, but it is

Photography by Skeeter Hagler



probably closer to the truth to say he didn't really want to be anything. He was restless, although not, it seems, like most people who grew up in small towns, eager to make it to the big towns. He was just restless, a low plains drifter.

By 19 he had more than a wife, he had a daughter, Michelle. He missed the Vietnam war and studied communications at Vincennes University in Vincennes, Indiana. He did a lot of drugs and played a lot of Frisbee, wore his hair long, protested the war. After college he worked for the telephone company.

You don't discover rock 'n' roll at one sky-opening, revelatory moment any more than you dis-

cover sex the first time you have it. Awareness has an imperceptible origin, and then there is the first tangible connection. For John, that was when he befriended an older boy who lived down the street. "I was eight or nine and this kid was 12. He had an electric guitar. He had a screened-in porch, and he'd sit there at night and play 'Peter Gunn.' I said, 'Man, that sounds great!' I'd go up to talk to him and he'd take me up to his room. He had all these 45s and we'd play them. That was that."

When he was 14 he taught himself to play guitar. The first band he played in was called Crepe Soul, who he stayed with for a year and a half and from whom he developed his distaste for group de-

mocracy: "They were always voting on something and never played anywhere. Next he joined a band called Snakepit Banana Barn, who fired him because he couldn't sing. Once, tired of hearing his parents bitch about hippies, he told them he wrote "Universal Soldier," which Donovan wrote. The senior Mellencamps thought it a beautiful song. John told them he had lied to get them to listen to the music he was listening to. He made his point."

At the end of 1972, he and friend Larry Crane formed a glitter band called Trash that did little more than perform homage to Bowie. He also wrote his first two songs, "One Way Driver" (inspired by the Stooges) and "Loser," a tribute to



Lou Reed. Trash rarely performed—no one would hire them because of the way they dressed. A year later Mellencamp got fired by the telephone company and was conned by a lawyer to take out a \$2,000 bank loan to make a demo tape. Although the tape should have cost half that, and the lawyer disappeared with the money and left Mellencamp with the bills, the singer did have a demo, his version of Paul Revere and the Raiders' "Kicks." He took it to the record companies all over New York. They passed. He figured that since Bowie was his idol, he might as well go up to Tony DeFries at Main Man, Bowie's management, and get rejected by them too. Sitting in the waiting room with two

dozen Bowie look-alikes, he was noticed because he looked so markedly different. DeFries signed him.

As you probably know, it was DeFries who renamed him Cougar and stretched John to Johnny as if the name were elastic. Mellencamp didn't know about the cosmetic surgery on his identity until he saw the cover for his first album, *Chestnut Street Incident*, and was told it was Cougar or no album. DeFries rolled Johnny Cougar out as the next David Bowie—and there should be a mortician who follows managers around when they do that, a gaunt, unobtrusive man who comes in and quietly measures the rock-star candidate from head

to toe and goes back out and builds the box they'll bury him in. Cougar was packaged as some sort of American son of the Bowie movement, with a hint of James Dean as a spiritual forefather.

But it was John who gave himself the bad attitude rep and ruined his career with MCA, who released *Chestnut Street Incident*. "I was a pretty snot-nosed kid back then. I mean, real arrogant—swaggering, loud-mouthed, beat-up-the-world type of guy. And I was under the illusion that record companies were kids. I went out to California for the very first time and I walk into the office and there's a bunch of old guys sitting there in suits. Flipped me out, man! Who the fuck are



these guys?' 'These guys are going to be selling your records.' 'No man, I don't want these guys selling my records, I want kids selling my records. Kids to kids. That's the way it's supposed to be.' That was my first illusion being broken. I was 22. I saw all these old guys and I got real flippant, real smart aleck. I was supposed to deliver two records and of course I got dropped immediately, because they hated me. As a matter of fact, there were a couple of guys who lost their jobs because they wanted to work that first record."

Which sold 12,000 copies and is a collector's item. *The Kid Inside* was delivered to MCA in 1977; they never released it. Main Man brought it out five years later, but by then John, who found he was stuck with the name Cougar since he couldn't get anyone from the record business to take his calls as Mellencamp, had long departed the DeFries life. When MCA dropped him, he phoned Bob Davis, who had signed him and been fired for sticking up for the album, and asked Davis to represent him in getting a deal, saying if they ever got anywhere, he'd pay him then. Davis agreed. They pounded the doors on both coasts and got nowhere: "I was going to go home, it was ridiculous. We had these tapes we were playing for people but they were terrible," says John. Davis said there was one more guy to try and John said OK, but maybe he should just go up and talk to him and bring his guitar and if the guy wanted to hear something he'd sing something, but he didn't want to play anyone those tapes anymore. So they went to see Billy Gaff, who managed Rod Stewart and was president of Riva Records, and John played "Taxi Dancer" and Gaff said he loved it and he wanted to sign him right there. "I think at the time he just wanted a tax shelter, 'cause he made a lot of money from Stewart. I kept calling and he wouldn't return my calls."

Signed nonetheless, Mellencamp went to live in England for a year, where he recorded and released *A Biography*, which was never distributed in the States but had moderate success in Europe and a number one single in Australia, "I Need a Lover." Gaff took John's new stuff to PolyGram, who market Riva in the U.S., but they weren't interested. They didn't like Gaff, who rode them hard on Stewart. It took someone else to convince PolyGram, with the same demos, to sign Mellencamp.

The first album was called simply *John Cougar* and showed him with a cigarette in his mouth on the cover. That was 1979.

Looking at the face on the cover—which is actually expressionless—one can imagine two completely different ranges of emotion: the cockiness of a rebel who has bucked the system that repudiated him, and is still in there, so who's laughing now?; or a man in his late twenties who's put his hand in the machine a couple of times and nearly lost his hand, who's been humbled enough to recognize a second chance in a good career, and who's not laughing.

The album contained "I Need a Lover," which Pat Benatar covered, and which established Mellencamp as a writer and won him a lot of AOR airplay. 1981's follow-up album *Nothing Matters and What If It Did?* had a couple of singles that did well, "This Time" and "Ain't Even Done with the Night," but it was the next album, released a year later, that hit paydirt. *American Fool*, with his first number one song, "Jack and Diane," was the biggest selling record of 1982. *Uh-Huh*, with the hits "Pink Houses" and "Hurts So Good" and the reinstatement of Mellencamp to his name, came out in 1983. *Scarecrow* was his masterpiece to date, artistically and commercially. And *The Lonesome Jubilee* is a better record.

3.

The small town thing about Mellencamp is exaggerated. We seem to want misconceptions about our rock



Laura Levine

"I was a pretty snot-nosed kid back then. I mean, real arrogant—swaggering, loud-mouthed, beat-up-the-world type of guy."

stars, or at least something larger than actuality. It's as if, having bought the record, we melt the vinyl and mold our own dashboard icons, the chief one being the rock star as working class hero. We worship the common man myth embodied in Springsteen, Petty, and Lennon. And although we would probably not watch a TV show called "Lifestyles of the Incredibly Ordinary," what we always secretly hope to find under the gold plate of our millionaires is the heart of a common person.

When we say someone is down-to-earth, we mean it as a profound compliment. Yet in America today there is no reality more undesirable: the people who really are down to earth are routinely and indifferently trodden into it.

And they are who Mellencamp writes and sings about, with an authenticity that comes mostly from knowing them, and partly from not pretending to be one of them. There is nothing fake about his songs. His music is urgent and earnest, but imperfect, flawed. It is the real sound of missing the target, rather than the perfect sound of pretending to hit it.

But we insist, or have it insisted upon us, that Mellencamp is the guardian of the generic Small Town, USA. Mellencamp wants none of this, not even Mellencamp the sharp businessman, which he taught himself to be just as he taught himself the guitar. It's not him. He not only doesn't want the cartoon heroism, he doesn't really realize the scope of it, because he lives in the calm eye of the hurricane, not on the outside where it is taken seriously.

When he sang "Small Town" on *Scarecrow*, he danced and skipped and in his slightly clumsy way twirled on the edge of a precipice—one note, one lyric so much as intoned wrong and the whole song, and perhaps the premise of the whole album, would have collapsed like a house of cards into hokeyness. But the song works. It evokes the life and virtues of a small town. And that's it. Because that's just about all the flavor there is in that bite and he knows it. He

doesn't wear small towns the way Springsteen wears the boardwalk or Lou Reed wears leather.

4.

The afternoon is unbearably hot and humid. We pull away from the studio in his bronze '56 Corvette, with the "Little Bastard" license plate that his band bought him and then, thinking he would never put it on the car, put it on for him.

The studio is a house, buried in the woods, that he bought for \$20,000, converted, and christened the Belmont Mall as a joke, since there is no mall in Belmont, although there was once a combination bait shop, gas station, and restaurant. He can't understand why musicians build studios in their homes, they lose their privacy. He likes the seven mile drive from his house to the studio. It feels like going to work.

He lives in a large two-story house with a huge indoor swimming pool area extending from the basement. He has a tennis court and an outdoor swimming pool, and beautifully landscaped grounds that butt up against unspoiled woods that drop away from the garden. From the wooden deck of the pool you can look into the middle and tops of the trees.

Soon after we arrive it storms, so we sit by the indoor pool. The sky turns so dark that he is only visible as a silhouette, sitting low in the stiff pool chairs, his legs stretched under the table. The rain is ferocious and draws around our conversation like a curtain.

How do you feel about Farm Aid?

"I feel good about it. I feel that Farm Aid always has been and always will be Willie Nelson's deal, his baby, and rightfully so. Willie is one of the nicest guys you could ever meet. I understand where the money is going, but there's a lot of things Willie does that I have to throw my hands up and say 'I can't do this!'"

Like what?

"Corporate sponsorship. I don't like playing and looking out and seeing a big Budweiser can. It kind of pisses me off, to be real honest. Corporate America has very little to do with the America I see. I understand Willie's point. Willie says to me, 'A dollar's a dollar and if you're trying to help people, who cares who it comes from?' I don't see it that way."

Did you achieve what you wanted with the *Chilliloth* protest last year?

"No. That's the bad news. It was a good kick-off job. That's the problem with these things: great first step but when you go to cross the finish line, there's just so little that can be done. I mean, let's be realistic about it. What the hell can you do? You can't change the world with one sweeping hand motion."

Are you disappointed with the way Americans have reacted?

"I use the old cliché, and I'm not putting anyone down, but 'I gave at the office.' And that's OK. Me too, I've adopted that to suit myself. But Farm Aid II—people were pretty burned out by that time. And now there's Farm Aid III. I guarantee it's going to happen, but it all goes back to Willie. He's going to do it when he wants to do it."

I read that more farms are being lost today than during the Depression.

"And we sit by idly! You don't have to be a real visionary to see what the end result is. The end result is shittier products for more money. They're gonna kill the land. They're already doing that. Even at some of the farms I've visited—man, cowshit didn't even smell like cowshit, and, you know, I've been smelling that stuff my whole life! That was not cowshit! It was coming out of the rear end of a cow but it was not cowshit. It scared me."

What's going to happen?

"I think that the spirit will carry many people through. I don't know for how many years but it will—and then a lot of them will be lost. Not because those



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people didn't have the spirit but because they just got sat on a lot harder."

Do you have any other political views beyond your involvement with the farmers?

"Yeah."

Well, what are they?

"Why don't you ask me a sweeping question?"

Is there anyone in the next election you're looking forward to?

"I don't even know anybody in the next election. I sure do think they were wrong getting Gary Hart out of the business. I think it's got nothing to do with politics. People say, 'Well, if you can't run your personal life...' Well, Goddamnit, who can run their personal life? People have a lot more luck around their business than they do around their personal life. You don't put as much thought into it. I mean, this guy, let's face it—he's a whoremonger! But so what! We've had plenty of presidents who have chased women, and some of them were pretty good. Hell, we're blowing up people in South America and you care if this guy's screwing some woman?"

What inspired The Lonesome Jubilee?

"I think *The Lonesome Jubilee* is another way of saying how I feel about life. I'm still optimistic about a lot of things but I've been punched a couple of times. I don't mean by critics, I mean just by our generation. You know, our generation was gonna change the world and we elected Ronald Reagan president."

"I didn't even want to write those songs. I came off the *Scarecrow* tour. I was tired. I'd had enough of the music business. I came back here and I could not walk by my guitar without picking it up and writing new songs. I thought, I don't want to bore anybody with repetition, but they all have the same passion. Sometimes I'll go, 'God, I really need to start writing,' but I couldn't stop writing. That's the first time that ever happened to me."

He has mixed emotions about the religious right, feeling that most evangelists do a poor job presenting the Bible. "They make you hate it! It's like when somebody comes up to you and says, 'Man, you gotta hear this record! It's the greatest record in the world! Come on, you're gonna love it. We gotta listen to it right now!' You got bad ears on and you're gonna hate it."

"I have to laugh at some of these guys. First of all, the majority are complete money scammers. Like Jimmy Swaggart. This guy—I think he's sincere but boy he sure does a rotten job. He might be great at just fuckin' ripping off old women, taking old women's money and telling people they need salvation. A lot of people do. Maybe I do. But I don't need it from him. Let me get used to that weird haircut you got and that stupid suit that don't fit you and that old Bible you sling around and that damn sweat rolling off your face that you must run around the block before you start. I even heard him put down Alcoholics Anonymous! How can he do that? That organization has helped millions of people and he's putting that down? I don't think God appreciates that. He's just fine at stealing money out of little old ladies' change purses, but how about the real general public? You have got the platform, man! Make something of it. Don't do that horseshit you do."

Not surprisingly, he's been asked to act (he's interested) and, not surprisingly, he turned down all the predictable rock 'n' roll rebel roles. James Dean holds no particular significance for him, other than he's from Indiana. "Nobody has done what James Dean has done and he didn't do it. There are a bunch of people I can point to that have done what they have done, and didn't do it. It was done to them." He thinks Sidney Poitier is America's finest actor and that if he wasn't black, more people would think so.

He almost apologizes for his videos because so little thought goes into them. His own role in them is the least thought through. He goes in front of the cam-

era and performs his bit like a shy child doing a solo on stage. He thinks they turn out alright, generally. His favorite is "Pink Houses" and his least favorite is the one made for "Hand to Hold Onto." His new videos were shot in South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, the underside of America that Reagan refuses to admit exists.

"These people are really, really poor. You know, 12 people living on three grand a year all in one home and if a window breaks—it's only going to be cold a couple of months a year, just hang a cover or a blanket

"Nobody has done what James Dean has done and he didn't do it. There are a bunch of people I can point to that have done what they have done, and didn't do it. It was done to them."

over it. It scares me to think they can exist like that.

"Everything they do down there just slays me. Those black guys, they get in their cars and they just go park. I don't even know what they're doing in there. And they're all over the place. They must be drinking or something. They're out in the country. Savannah's an hour away. There ain't a house in sight. All there is is swampland and there they are parking on the side of the road. Always got the radio going. It's real interesting to me, this life. What do these people look forward to? What do they like? They must like sitting in their car, 'cause I see them doing it all the time."

"It's weird to me, and I was pretty much of a hillbilly. But I love driving around there and occasionally seeing an old black man playing his guitar on his porch, a couple of kids sitting around—and it sounds like hell, the guitar's not even remotely in tune. That's what the blues is. I like the story. I don't think I want to live that."

He tells a great Hank Williams story: "I think it was in New York City, they had gone in to play, a whole bunch of them. It was real early in the morning and he was drunk and he walked in. They're all sitting there in the car—they don't have any reservations. Hank went in there and took his guitar and smashed it down on the desk. And he says, 'I'm fucking Hank Williams and us hillbillies want a Goddamn room now!' I love that story. You know those people in New York hotels, they're kinda elitist. My favorite part is that he announced who he was, 'I'm Hank Williams,' like that guy even knew or cared."

5.

The album is finished, but John still wants to record an acoustic song, "Never Too Old," as a B-side for a single, and a Woody Guthrie song for a benefit album the Smithsonian is putting together to resuscitate the Folkways label and for which several other artists are doing Guthrie covers.

After dinner, we drive back to the studio. The storm has cleared the air and the rain has evaporated from the winding brown roads. The light of the sky and the green fields make Bloomington look like the English countryside.

At the studio, everyone assembles in the central room, including Tim Elser, John's best friend, and Rick Fettig, another lifelong friend and general assistant, whom John describes as "sort of a gentleman's gentleman." The band sit in a circle around the coffee

table, picking at their instruments. John sits on the edge of the couch, a cigarette in his right hand, his left arm hanging over the top of his acoustic guitar, keeping it on his knee. Dave Leonard, his engineer, and Don Gehman, his co-producer, sit to his right; opposite them is Mike Wanchic, who has a steel guitar on his knees, and smiles and laughs easily. Larry Crane sits next to him, holding his guitar in his lap like a deputy riding shotgun. Lisa Germano sits on a tall stool between Larry and the couch, leaning slightly off of it into the circle. She has large, curious eyes

and round cheeks, and the movements and feel of a small bird. When she sits up to play, tucking the violin under her left cheek, she has a delicate curve to her back. She plays intensely and exquisitely, and her body moves with the sound as her foot taps gently on the rung of the stool. John Cascella sits on the edge of the recording console, one foot on the ground, opening and closing his accordion.

They sound good playing like this. There has been no prior rehearsal of "Never Too Old" but John has played them the melody and they have picked it up and the sound is producing itself. He corrects and adjusts them, pleasantly one minute, roughly the next if someone isn't getting it. They are creating the song on the spot, John leaning over to read the lyrics which he hasn't memorized yet. It sounds like porch singing.

And they want to keep that sound, so John says they'll try recording it just like that. They sit in a circle inside the performance room of the studio and record it "live." But it doesn't work. They try a dozen takes, most of which sound fine, but neither Mellencamp nor Gehman like. Sometimes they'll be running through it beautifully and suddenly stop, the music tumbling to the ground, as somebody blew their part.

They break. Throughout the session Mellencamp has been all business. In playbacks he spots the faults in tone or volume of an individual instrument. He modifies the sound at the board. "You want to keep it?" asks Gehman. "No," says Mellencamp.

He is sitting in the center of the room, a foot up on the table, leaning way back in the chair, dangling the rock on the string. It is after nine o'clock and someone has closed the venetian blinds against the dark. A friend of John's, a lumberjack, has stopped by with his girlfriend. He takes the rock on the string and soon has four in a row. Everyone talks about local gossip. Mellencamp takes the rock back.

Suddenly he wants to get back to work, so back to work it is. I get up to do something before I realize I don't work there. That's how swift the mood change is. Recess is over.

They set up all over the house, having decided to abandon the porch singing approach, so John Cascella sets up in the reception, Mike in the larger living room that serves as an office during the day, Larry and John go into their individual recording chambers in the studio. They hear each other and the music over headphones and when they do a roll call they realize they've lost Lisa. They find her and set her up in the studio too.

It still doesn't work with John playing and singing simultaneously. Finally, he gives even that up and records the guitar with the rest of the music and goes

back into the studio, alone, and does the vocals. He sings them a few times. The last one is best and when everyone listens to the playback they all agree it sounds better this way.

Still not finished, they experiment with adding a bass line. Since Toby Myers, the bass player, is out sick, Cascella plays it on the sampler—the “S word” they call it.

The bass works and the song is complete. Maybe. John doesn't like his vocal, it sounds tired to him. There is discussion about the mike simply diminishing

rows of tables and the stage, in the corner, where the bands play.

Tonight is cheap beer night and it lives up to Mike's gleeful briefing: rivers and lakes of beer mark the topography and ecstatic drunk college kids greet every pronouncement from the stage by launching waves of beer towards their neighbors. It rains beer. The occasional missile of the plastic glass with beer explodes around the room. Beer is purchased in oceanic measures, sipped, and launched.

Dr. Bop, a legendarily popular Midwest bar band,



Shooter Hogler

and that this has affected the sound. Don likes the performance of the vocal but not the recording. He knows it's not right. Mellencamp looks irritated. "I sound tired and I don't particularly like my phrasing," he tells me. "I dunno, I'll listen to it tomorrow, maybe I'll say the hell with it and keep it. Sometimes I phrase things funny anyway."

John goes home. Mike, Don, Dave, and I go for a drink.

6.

There are only two bars in Bloomington to hear music and I forget the name of the other one. We went to the Bluebird, a long, sawdust covered floor college-town bar. At the back is a big, square, two-tiered room. The first level is table-less and it's where people dance or stand against the railing, drinking from plastic glasses and watching the groups. Below them are

are playing. They are the ultimate bar band. They do an hour set of rock 'n' roll classics that remove all desire and opportunity to think. At one point, the lead singer plays guitar upside down, hanging by his legs from a rafter. And he plays well. Two cute, curvy back-up singers—frequently announced and reannounced as the something or other sisters—dance, shake, and sing in a supreme choreography of camp. The dark-haired one has a great voice and does Aretha as you better do her if you're going to do her in public. And they have their own barman, which even the Beastie Boys haven't thought of yet, who makes and serves the band members drinks. Standing behind his bar in a tuxedo, soaked from head to foot, mixing cocktails and toweling glasses dry, he looks perfectly natural. Later, when they play "Surfin' USA" he gets to do a solo as a human surfboard. The band rips into the song as, uncomplainingly, he gets down on his hands and knees and women from the crowd come on stage and hang ten on his back. Some look like they would draft high in the pros if women played college football.

Continued on page 71

APOCALYPSE A G A I N

The Philippines:
America's next secret war.

Article by Dan Connell

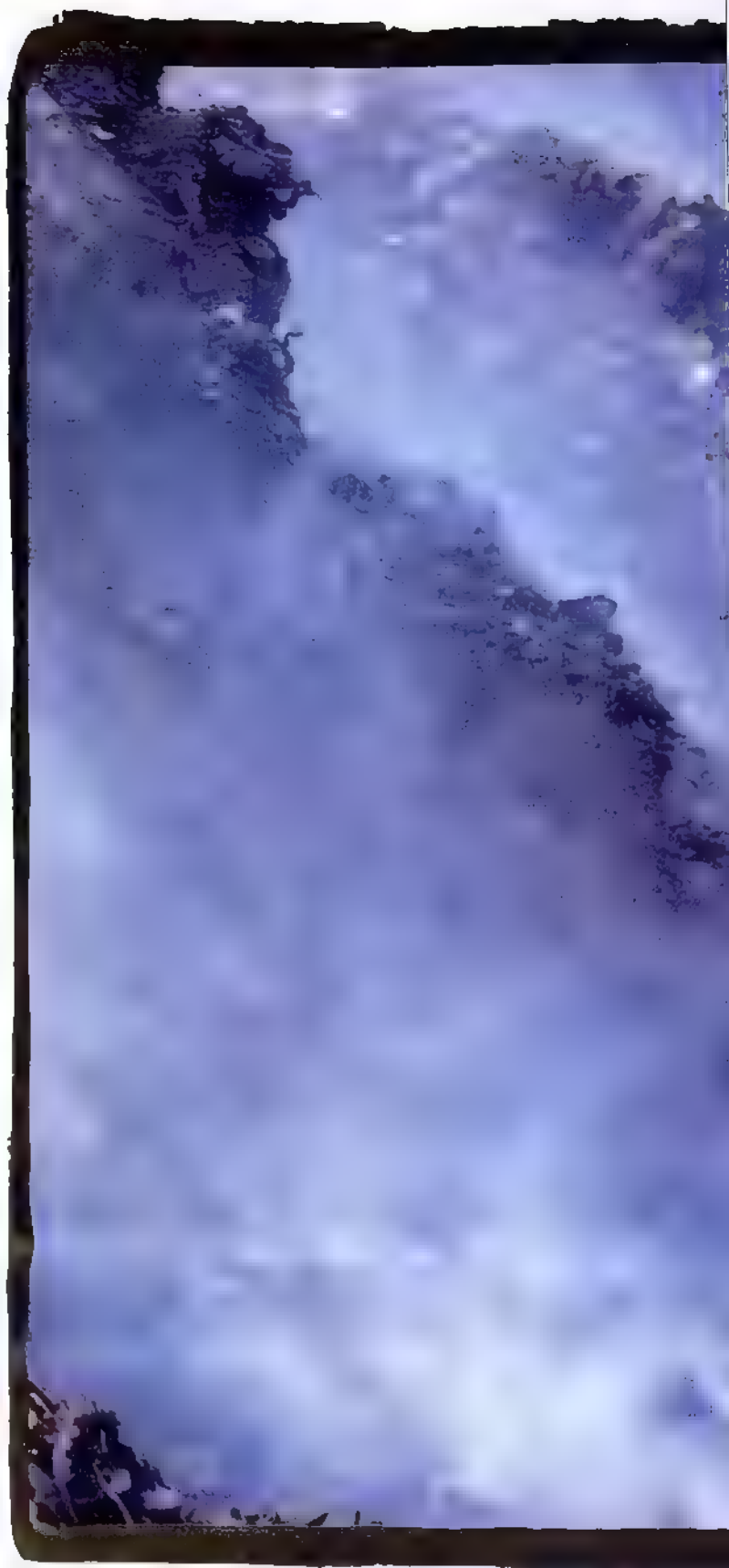
The United States is at war in the Philippines. Quietly, while the media is focused on events in South Korea and Nicaragua, key U.S. military and intelligence experts are arriving in Manila straight from their experiences in Central America, and before that, Vietnam. Direct military aid to the Philippines has tripled in the past year, and Reagan recently allocated the C.I.A. \$10 million to step up covert activity.

At stake for the United States are two of the largest U.S. military bases in the world—both with rare license to store American nuclear weapons on foreign soil. The bases serve as “forward deployment” sites for 16,000 troops pointed at the Asian mainland. In addition, U.S.-based corporations like Coca-Cola and investment firms like Citibank have billions of dollars at risk. Three of the islands' six largest companies are U.S.-owned, the remnants of an era in which American domination was total.

That situation no longer holds. In the last 18 years, in response to the corruption of the Marcos regime, the New People's Army—an underground guerrilla force led by the country's communist party—has swelled from a handful of rebels to a 25,000-troop threat. In a country torn by poverty, the NPA represents an armed

*One of the 18,000 Filipinos living on “Smoky Mountain,”
downtown Manila's 500-foot-high garbage dump.*

Photography by Chris Cartter







Rally at the Department of Labor, site of February's massacre of 19 farmers by the Philippine military.

campaign for sweeping economic and land reform. The Philippine army, meanwhile, is reeling from the corruption that reduced it to a corps of poorly trained soldiers lacking combat boots and working weapons. American policymakers ignored this mounting crisis for years, accepting Marcos's assurances that the communist insurgency was under control. But with Marcos's fall, the U.S. has now come face to face with the harsh realities of the Philippines.

While the United States is busy retraining the "New Armed Forces of the Philippines," Philippine officials are arming urban street gangs and death squads to counter the NPA. Internal security has passed into the hands of these officially sanctioned vigilantes.

Today, many of the same organizations and personalities backing the Nicaraguan contras—some of which got their start 30 years ago in Southeast Asia—are turning up in the Philippines. Retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub—who orchestrated secret counterinsurgency activities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and later advised Lt. Col. Oliver North on Nicaragua—recently established an office in Manila. He says he's in the country to hunt for treasure. The World Anti-Communist League, Reverend Moon's CAUSA International, and the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries all now have operations in the Philippines.

Newspapers throughout the Philippines carry daily coverage of stepped-up military operations and atrocities on both sides of the war front. Stories appear detailing the complex mix of U.S. aid—both overt and covert—in what is turning into a full-scale civil war.

Many local commentators are warning that the Philippines is becoming the next Vietnam.

SPIN recently traveled to the Philippine Islands to report on the situation. Journeying from the Manila capital across remote haciendas to secret guerrilla hideouts, through the wealthy plantations and impoverished villages on the island of Negros and then down to the war-torn southern island of Mindanao, SPIN interviewed U.S. diplomats, Philippine officials, church leaders, plantation owners, unemployed farm workers, torture victims, and war refugees.

What emerges is a portrait of a nation on the brink of disaster.

Right now there are more than 40 vigilante groups, with names like the Christian Liberation Army, Filipino Crusaders, El Tigre, and the Peace and Order Brigade. Their targets are community organizers, trade unionists, human-rights activists, and church leaders.

Standing in front of his church just after it was hand-grenaded, Bishop Antonio Fortich counts his blessings. Three other churches on his island of Negros were completely blown up a short time ago. "Nowadays, if you work with the poor you're suspect," he says. "If you talk about land reform, you're a troublemaker. If you support human rights, you're a subversive. So my problem now is, what sort of work can I do without being called a communist?"

This spring a hit list of 25 trade-union activists was circulated at the large Ladeco plantation on Min-

"They took out their bolos and hacked him to pieces in front of us. When the military arrived, the killers were still there, but they left together as if nothing had happened."

dano. Peter Alderite's name was at the top. Arriving for work that same day, he was grabbed by members of the violent Tadtad ("chop-chop") vigilante group, who dragged him from the field where he was harvesting bananas.

"They took out their bolos and hacked him to pieces in front of us," recalls a worker whose name was also on the list and who is now in hiding. "When the military arrived, the killers were still there, but they left together as if nothing had happened."

Hundreds have disappeared or been assassinated since the recent explosion of vigilante violence began last March, but so far no arrests have been made. In response, NPA troops have stepped up their offense, routinely ambushing military patrols and bombing strategic targets.

There are two different societies in the Philippines. One is chic, sophisticated, and so Americanized it feels like Los Angeles—the flashy high-rise office buildings in Manila's Makati District are known locally as "Wall Street East." The other consists of a lush countryside filled with starving, landless people, and city slums jammed with millions who can't find jobs. Nearly three-quarters of the 60 million Filipinos live below the poverty line, and despite being the fourteenth largest food-producing country in the world, the Philippines has the lowest average intake of calories in Asia—including Bangladesh. Seventy percent of all children are malnourished.

When the Philippine Plaza Hotel was built in downtown Manila just ten years ago, construction costs of \$100,000 per room made it the most expensive in the world.

Blocks away stands an equally stunning sight. "Smokey Mountain" is a 500-foot-high garbage dump covering two square blocks. 18,000 Filipinos live in two shantytowns carved into the side of the refuse.

Barefoot children pick their way through piles of twisted metal, crumpled paper, and broken glass, while flames shoot up around them, bursting four feet into the air out of this smoldering debris. The kids search for discarded cans and unspoiled plastic containers that they can sell to junk dealers. For every 100 they can earn the price of a handful of rice.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Cory Aquino's non-violent revolution of two years ago was going to mark the change. But *Time's* 1986 Woman of the Year is having her difficulties.

"Aquino's in over her head," says a Western journalist. "She's totally dependent on the people around her."

"These are all wealthy people running this government," says one diplomat. "Even if they're well meaning, they don't do things at the cost of anything they have. We've basically had a return to the pre-Marcos days."

A fact-finding mission headed by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark reported in June that "even though the rebellion ousted Ferdinand Marcos from power, it left in place many of the political structures and social inequalities on which his dictatorship was built. . . key civilian and military positions have been filled by individuals who either served faithfully under the Marcos dictatorship or were part of the oligarchy

which has dominated both the Marcos and Aquino regimes."

Last year, a series of abortive right-wing coups deepened Aquino's dependence on two men with very strong ties to both Marcos and the United States—newly-appointed Defense Secretary Rafael Iloilo and Armed Forces Chief Fidel Ramos. Both men graduated from West Point. After fighting as a U.S. officer in World War II, Iloilo served with the U.S. in Vietnam and Laos before returning to the Philippines to head the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency—the Philippine version of the C.I.A. Gen. Ramos, while working under Marcos, created the Civilian Home Defense Forces—a 70,000-strong paramilitary force into which Aquino is trying to integrate the right-wing vigilante groups.

While many are shocked to see Cory Aquino turn to the C.I.A. and the Pentagon for help, former *New York Times* reporter and expert on the Philippines, Ray Bonner, is not. "She has welcomed the Americans," according to Bonner, "rather than take on the Philippine elite."

Before Aquino came to power, one anti-Marcos journalist told Bonner that she would never be able to fulfill her campaign promises of reform because "she would have to go against her friends and her class."

North of Manila is a sprawling 18,000-acre plantation known as Hacienda Lusita. It depends on the seasonal labor of 2,000 migrant workers who stay in garage-like structures divided by makeshift walls of scrap metal and burlap sacks. Altogether there are 20,000 workers and residents, making it a small, enclosed town. Hacienda Lusita is typical of the many large plantations and farming operations in all ways except one. It is owned by President Cory Aquino and her family. In fact, Aquino is one of the biggest landlords in the Philippines. Her plantation once produced 10 percent of the country's sugar crop. Hacienda Lusita stands as a working part of the feudal system that candidate Aquino pledged to dismantle.

A cease-fire between the military and the NPA was in effect last January when some 10,000 farmers marched across the Mendiola Bridge leading to the Malacanang Palace, where Aquino keeps her offices. The farmers came to call for the land reform that she had promised, but she refused to meet with them. Instead, without warning, soldiers waiting at the foot of the bridge hoisted their M-16's and fired into the crowd for more than a minute. When the smoke cleared, 19 Filipinos lay dead—more than any single death toll in the capital city during Marcos's rule.

A short time later, just north of Manila in Lupao, 17 farmers—including several children—were shot in a similar incident. Aquino visited the scene and, in an apparent gesture of conciliation, distributed Cory dolls to the locals. No one was punished for either shooting. The New People's Army reacted by calling off the cease-fire.

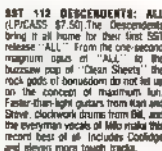
In February, in a speech before the Philippine Military Academy, Aquino made what amounted to a declaration of war. Gen. Ramos vowed that his troops would "hit, and hit hard."

It was Human Rights Day in Davao City. A sprawling

What have we done for you lately?



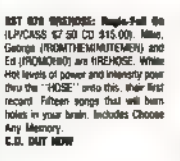
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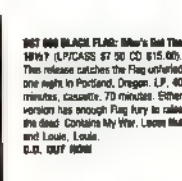
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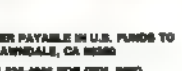
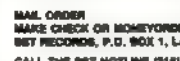
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Many of the same organizations and personalities backing the Nicaraguan contras are turning up in the Philippines.



Soldier in a New People's Army camp.

town, Davao is geographically the largest city in the world—well known for agriculture and coconut exports, but better known as the main battleground of this raging civil war. For Federico Fuentes, this was a big day. As one of the marshalls at the town's annual parade, he would have to keep the peace. But only a few hours passed after he leaned to kiss his 26-year-old wife, Lilian, goodbye, before she heard the news on the radio. Federico had barely begun marching when machine guns opened fire, killing him with a rain of bullets. Neighbors who had fled the attack burst into the one-room shack with the details.

"He was one of the last to take cover because he was trying to get other marchers out of the way," they told her, as she sat clutching her slender arms tight against her tiny frame. "He was a jackpot victim."

Davao has long been the home base for the NPA and the communist revolution. Today it is also home to the most active of the many right-wing death squads.

Alsa Masa, "Rising Masses," is the prototype for all the rest. Brandishing American M-16 automatic rifles and army-issued revolvers, its members man checkpoints during the day and patrol streets throughout the night. Residents say they are forced to pay the group a "tax" of one peso a day. Shopkeepers say they pay more.

"There is no place for neutrality," says one local. "If you don't join the Alsa Masa, you're called a communist. They paint your house with a red X, and you're marked for death."

No one was ever charged in the killing of Federico Fuentes. Alsa Masa operates with impunity. Its actions have the endorsement of the state. Last winter, the Davao City Council allocated the group \$9,000.

"The communists advocate violence, so we are organizing a village defense system," says Lt. Col. Franco Calida, who heads the local police. Trained in the U.S. during the '70s with the special forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Calida says he's "obsessed" with rooting out communists. A small man, he speaks angrily from behind his large desk in an office decorated with commemorative plaques, a picture of President Aquino, and two giant posters of Sylvester Stallone's Cobra—the super cop. The Colonel says, "We will cook them in their own oil."

Gen. Ramos calls Col. Calida's vigilante squads "civilian organizations dedicated to the defense of their community."

When Aquino visited Davao last March, she praised the vigilantes as a "concrete manifestation of people power and an effective weapon against communism."

Earlier that month, the president had declared that all paramilitary troops were banned. But Ramos angrily protested, "If there's any group that should be dissolved, it's the NPA." Aquino bowed to the military and reversed herself.

The country's Presidential Commission on Human Rights saw things differently, charging that recruitment to the Alsa Masa is "involuntary" and recommending that it be disbanded. Instead, President Aquino dissolved the commission. Sister Mariani Dimaranan, one of its members, says, "She dumped us to appease the military."

Four times last year, retired U.S. Maj. Gen. John Singlaub flew into Manila not as a treasure hunter, but as a "CIA contract agent," according to Ramsey Clark's

report, which states that Singlaub "spent several months in the Philippines meeting with right-wing politicians, businessmen, and military officers urging them to organize vigilante groups to protect themselves from communism."

It has been widely reported that Singlaub has recruited some 37 mercenaries—formerly with the special forces in Vietnam—to train vigilantes in "unconventional warfare techniques." Singlaub, however, denies these reports, saying, "It would be wrong for any foreigner to intervene in any way, and I have never done so."

Still, one famous vigilante leader, Alberto "Maggi" Maguidad from Taguigarao, claims that his group is backed by Singlaub and his World Anti-Communist League. The rapid growth of such private right-wing organizations indicates that the battle for the Philippines is being fought on a second, less visible, front.

One of the hallmarks of the Reagan Administration has been the "privatization" of foreign policy. While the United States officially maintains a low profile in areas of concern worldwide, America's interests are increasingly being protected by the activities of non-governmental organizations.

Some groups, like Singlaub's and Reverend Moon's CAUSA International, clearly project their right-wing political agenda. CAUSA chairman, Bo Hi Pak, describes the church's strategy as "a total war, a war of ideas." Others, like the relief-agency Americares, put forward an image that is charitable and humanitarian.



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The soldiers shot 17 farmers, including several children. Aquino visited the scene and, in a gesture of conciliation, distributed Cory dolls to the locals.

But the work they perform can be easily twisted into a political weapon. Americares got its start in Vietnam, where another name for food and medicine was "pacification program." Today, this group is working with the armed forces in El Salvador and Guatemala, and with the contras on the border of Nicaragua. Last year, the U.S. Air Force flew \$13 million in drugs donated by Americares into the war zones of the Philippines.

On the island of Negros, relief-aid is proving to be as powerful a political weapon as guns. It is a tropical paradise about the size of Connecticut, and most of the three-million people who live here don't know if they will eat from day to day. Families that for generations have worked the rich black topsoil lost their jobs when the raging civil war, along with sharp drops in the price of sugar, idled most of this island's farmland.

Millions of dollars in emergency relief have poured into Negros from the U.S. and other Western countries, but most of it is channeled into "foundations" set up by the planters. On any afternoon, the poolside lounge at the Sugarland Hotel buzzes with the whispered conversation of these shirtsleeved aristocrats who have organized a network to control this aid and turn it to their advantage. They dole out food to their workers in exchange for pledges of loyalty, and require them to attend special anti-communist seminars run by the local militia.

While traveling through Negros, SPIN turned up documents revealing that dozens of newly formed relief agencies run by the plantation owners come under the umbrella of the Negros Foundation for Peace and Democracy (NFPD), which is itself connected to an affiliate of Gen. Singlaub's World Anti-Communist League. The NFPD says its goal is to provide covert support for the counterinsurgency.

A concept paper sent out by the NFPD to a prospective European donor warns that "any hopes for winning the struggle and achieving economic recovery would have to hinge on a drastic reduction in the number of rebels and rebel-affected areas. It is clear that no single measure will achieve that: not an all-out military campaign, nor an intensive counter-propaganda effort, nor an amnesty/rehabilitation program for the rebels. All of these would have to be linked together in an integrated program that attacks all aspects of the problem. The Philippine government obviously needs the cooperation of the private sector, which can do things that it cannot or has chosen not to do. This is where the NFPD hopes to fit in. . . (these covert activities) will have to be funded under less than transparent circumstances, if only to protect the donor/s and keep the Foundation's 'anti-Communist', counter-propaganda plans restricted to a 'need-to-know' basis."

According to local church leaders and human-rights groups, the C.I.A. is guiding the landlords in their campaign against the unionists.

"Today there is a very strong covert American presence in Negros," says Lito Coscolluela, an advisor to the island's governor, Daniel Lacson. "They are in constant consultation with rightist leaders here."

Ironically, most of the techniques used in covert



U.S. operations throughout the world were developed in the Philippines more than 30 years ago, the last time a leftist revolt in these islands threatened American interests. The United States, realizing that the government of President Elpidio Quirino was too corrupt to suppress the revolution, secretly sponsored its own candidate against Quirino in a presidential election.

C.I.A. Director Allen Dulles offered \$5 million to underwrite the campaign of Ramon Magsaysay, but the agency's station chief in Manila said he could win the election with only \$1 million. Much of the cash, which was quickly delivered in a suitcase, was solicited from private corporations—one of the largest contributors being the Coca-Cola franchise in the Philippines.

With one agent writing Magsaysay's speeches and another drugging Quirino's drinks to make him appear incoherent during a major campaign speech, the C.I.A. candidate won handily. That taken care of, the agency turned its attention to the insurgents.

C.I.A. teams flew light aircraft over the rebels on cloudy days, broadcasting curses from tribal gods in native languages. Other teams infiltrated villages at night to paint "evil eyes" on houses that faced rebel sympathizers. Assassinations were carried out and made to appear as if done by vampires.

The C.I.A. chief in Manila who masterminded these "dirty tricks" was Edward Lansdale. By 1954, having effectively destroyed the rebel movement in the Philippines, he moved on to his next assignment—Vietnam.

Since March, hundreds have disappeared or been assassinated.

There, Lansdale developed "Low Intensity Conflict," a war strategy which the U.S. would later bring to Central America. Today in the Philippines, LIC has evolved into a rival to traditional combat. It is a mix of charity, propaganda, and terror campaigns by both public and private groups. One U.S. general calls it, "total war at the grassroots level."

Last May, a Philippine Air Force helicopter gunship crashed, killing four airmen. It was flying to help in the filming of one of the many movies shot on location in the Philippines, Chuck Norris' *Missing in Action III*. Newspapers angrily denounced the bloodthirsty American moviegoers. But a week later, as long lines stretched around corners in downtown Manila for the opening of *Missing in Action II*, the same newspapers were filled with feature stories and advertisements promoting the action film.

The people of the Philippines anxiously await these action films shot in their backyard—movies like *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now*, which use the Philippines because the landscapes are so similar to those of Vietnam. But few of those who pack the darkened theaters—in the Philippines as well as in the U.S.—realize how similar the countries really are.

"The situation here is just like Vietnam in 1964," says Father Buddy Mana-ay. "The only difference is there is no U.S. manpower commitment yet."

SPIN

Pretty silly get-up for work, right? The deal is that my SPIN allowance (they call it "salary") forces me to work nights. No, gutterbrain . . . not *that*! I DJ at a club and don't have time to change between jobs. Have you ever tried to plow through manuscripts with gloves on? I could take them off, but a girl has to retain some sense of style (even around here). So how about subscribing to SPIN, so I can have one decent paying job. Just 24 greenbacks (\$30 Canadian, \$30 U.S. elsewhere in the universe) will get you a well-informed year's worth of excellent articles, interviews, killer photography, and thorough music coverage. Be a doll, write that check . . . these heels are killing me.

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HIATT HOTEL

John Hiatt has survived heartbreak, but he's still down at the end of Lonely Street.

Article by Bart Bull

Photography by Chris Cuffaro

He's late. It's not necessarily his fault, but he's late just the same. Too late to do anything about it but sit tight in a cab that's sitting tight in the Soho traffic. "I'd hate to blow my last chance as an old dog to be a fresh new face," John Hiatt says. It's supposed to be a joke.

The photo session is for a special magazine section in the Sunday *New York Times*, and the idea is to assemble a diverse dozen rapidly rising up-and-comers from different aspects of the arts, stand them against a wall together, and shoot them. How it came about that John Hiatt, who's had seven albums out over the last 13 years, got included is one of those mysteries that occur spontaneously in the marriage of journalism and public relations. It doesn't matter—he's not too late after all, just the second-to-last of the rapidly rising up-and-comers to arrive. A Ray Charles record is moaning somewhere in the upper reaches of the loft, and one of the photographer's assistants introduces Hiatt around: "This one is a sculptor and this one is an opera singer and this one is an actress. And you're a...you're a blues singer?"

"That's right," he says. It's better than a lot of other possibilities, better than "singer-songwriter," better than hearing himself described once more as another of those new-wave-era song-mongers oozing clever words from every orifice, better than having her announce him as a perennial critics'-darling also-ran who never seems to sell any records and has bounced from one record label to another. "A blues singer," he says. Ray Charles moans.

When he was a teenager, Hiatt left Indianapolis for Nashville, lured by the sound of the clear-channel R&B station he'd listened to late at night. He got a job as a staff songwriter with one of the big music publishing firms, starting with a salary of 25 bucks a week. From there he fell into something like a solo career, putting out a

couple of albums on Epic. They didn't sell, and in those days the critics had yet to notice him. He spent the next few years on the road, playing what little was left of the coffeehouse circuit, playing songs nobody'd ever heard even after he'd just finished singing them. "I did it so long to such little avail with such weird gigs that I literally didn't know my own name anymore." He drank a lot.

"I started drinking when I was real young—drinking and playing guitar always seemed to go together real well. Mainly I was operating, as I had ever since I was about nine, out of sheer terror. Fear. I weighed over 300 pounds by the time I was 15 years old. I was pretty screwed up. I simply was in too much pain to deal with it, to deal with my feelings. I was so nuts, so scared, that I started inventing a person I thought could survive out there in the world. I distinctly remember when the real John Hiatt, whoever that was, left off and the one of my own invention started. I was—"

They need him now for the photo. "I'm busted," Ray Charles howls. "Shall I bring my props?" Hiatt asks, holding up a guitar. "Or just myself?"

He got off the road as the '70s ground down, moved to L.A., got signed to MCA, made a couple of albums, got some nice reviews, didn't sell any records. "It's a funny thing," he says. "‘Slug Line’ was the number one most-added record for radio station airplay the week it came out." A laugh. "The next week it was gone." Another laugh. "Talk about your dashed hopes." No laugh.

The photographer places Hiatt near the middle of the assortment of artists, and he riffs along with Ray Charles as the song ends. The photographer moves him over just a step to his left. "This is a double-page spread and that way you won't get caught in the staples." That sounds good to Hiatt, and he knocks out a twangy little run that sets the big opera singer into a swinging little two-step, although she's careful to stay on her side of the crease. She's got an up-and-coming career of

her own to keep unstapled.

For a singer-songwriterish guy, Hiatt plays a whole lot of guitar, and when he met Ry Cooder after the second MCA record sank, Cooder took Hiatt, band and all, on a couple of tours with him. By now MCA was through with John Hiatt, but another major label was there to pick up the slack. "The pressure was on. I'd signed with Geffen, I was the golden boy with the blank check. Their attitude was sort of 'If he can't break it, nobody can...' And of course I bought into it. I felt the pressure and acted accordingly. I was really getting kinda squirrely round about that time, doing peculiar things, misbehaving ceremoniously. And the record came out and stiffed."

Drugs and alcohol weren't really working any longer. A lot of things weren't exactly working out. A lot of things were blurry. "I forget now when *Riding with the King* came out but it didn't do anything." The photographer has an idea now. He wants the dancer to stand on point and make big gestures with his arms, he wants the actress with the shampoo commercial hair to drape herself on the floor, he wants the sculptor to do something sculptural. "Whatever anybody does, I'd like it to be a little bit more extreme, okay?"

He's talking Hiatt's language now, or at least one he can remember. He remembers going on tour with Cooder, playing the hockey rinks as an opening act for Eric Clapton, and he remembers that he kept thinking that sooner or later Cooder or somebody was going to come to him and tell him how badly he was blowing it. He sort of remembers making *Warming Up to the Ice Age*, the last of his records for Geffen. "My understanding is that one of the aspects of the disease is denial, and I was in it big time." He remembers coming home sometime around then and finding his wife hanging from the ceiling.

He took his infant daughter and left. He got some help from some unlikely places. He stopped drinking, stopped



drugging. Life got better slowly, better and better. He was at loose ends again, with no record contract—*Warming Up to the Ice Age* hadn't sold any records, oddly enough—and nobody thought he was a golden boy anymore, and nobody was offering him any blank checks. And life got better and better all the same, which is just one of those funny things that happens. A small laugh.

The reason he's stacked in among the other 11 up-and-comers is that he

has a new album, *Bring the Family*, and a new record company that figures it's going to sell. He went into a studio with Ry Cooder and Nick Lowe and Jim Keltner and a bunch of new songs, songs full of good jokes that cut on all edges. They finished the album in four days, playing together live in the studio with no rehearsals. The record label may be wrong or they might be right but Hiatt figures it's not for him to say. He knows he likes it, and that's a start.

The photo-flash freezes every up-and-comer in his or her own extreme pose, and when the photographer has banged enough film, they're all free to go their separate rapidly rising ways. Hiatt has a piece of paper and a pen in hand, and he trails around as everyone is leaving, asking for autographs. "I want to have something to show my grandkids someday," he says. "When they say 'Aw, you were never really in showbiz,' I'll just whip out this paper with all these big names on it and that'll

show 'em." He gets the opera singer and the sculptor and the dancer, he gets the painter and the playwright and the classical musician, he gets the flattered signature of every single star of the future but that of the actress with the mighty hair, and she's gone for good.

"I guess that invalidates the whole thing," someone says to him.

"No, it doesn't," John Hiatt says. Not everything has to work out perfectly.



DEF NOT DUMB

L.L. Cool J discovers the difference between fans and supporters. The little girls understand.

Article by
Annette Stark



The room is filled with young, black rappers. I sniff around for the old familiar rock 'n' roll smells—beer, sweat, and weed—but all I get are competing whiffs of orange juice and aftershave. Since it is four hours before the main event, L.L. Cool J is nowhere to be found. His tour manager, Tony Rome, talks animatedly into the phone, stopping whenever some new guy enters the room to introduce me as Laura Devlin. Finally he apologizes. "You'll have to excuse me. I've been on the road too long."

I nod in understanding. He thinks that the room is moving. He tells the rappers what he can remember about me, that I'm "no stranger to rock 'n' roll." This holds their interest for about a minute, and after being asked a polite five questions about my-husband-the-Ramone, I'm retired to the wall. The talk returns to rap music and each other. Who's good, who's better. Who gave up rapping to become a singing star. "I just told the guy to forget it," says Ecstasy of Whodini, laughing. "I mean, it's one thing if he wants to get three motherfucker backup singers. But for him to just go out there alone and sing—he just wants to be socially accepted, to sing because Diana sings and maybe he can get invited to the American Music Awards. No way it's gonna happen."

Here in New Orleans, on a five-band rapstravaganza starring L.L. Cool J, the big topic is, inappropriately enough, the Beastie Boys. Currently on the road with the star of their own show, a much-hyped giant hydraulic penis, the Beasties so infuriated the decent folk of Columbus, Georgia, that the elders called a town meeting and passed a law forbidding obscenities at local rock concerts.

So a week later, along came L.L. Cool J, the rap sex symbol of the moment, and business as usual: rubbing his balls, humping the audience. Shirtless, he simulated sex on a couch with his bronze back to the crowd. All you could see was a Kangol hat and this terrific ass, undulating up and down with the lyrics of his pop hit, "I Need Love." As soon as the show finished, the Columbus authorities threw him in jail.

"But it wasn't a racial thing," Tony Rome assures me later. When I laugh cynically, he repeats himself. "It wasn't a racial thing. It was a rock censorship thing."

I'm sure it was. It's just funny that the Beasties' stampede on behalf of Evil Incarnate has finally won them recognition in law. And it's ironic that L.L. Cool J—that's short for Ladies Love Cool J—went to the slammer for some other rappers' giant hydraulic schlong.

SPIN: Was the boxing photo on the back of *Bigger and Deffer* put there to draw a connection between yourself and Muhammad Ali?

L.L. COOL J: No, but I like the connection. I put the picture there to signify my own hunger, strength, and power. Ali is definitely a good example because I've got the eye of the tiger and I'm not gonna chill. My first album was a title match and I won the belt. Every one after that is a title match until I retire and bow out gracefully. Nobody's gonna take me.

SPIN: Why not?

L.L. COOL J: I'm not on a souped-up little brat trip. I'm not gonna let anyone take me because I'm gonna keep fighting and working. That's not an arrogant point of view. I'm hungry and self-confident, and when you work hard, why not be proud? Pride and arrogance are two different things, and my audience—they know what time it is.

SPIN: When did you realize you had talent?

L.L. COOL J: I've been rhymin' since I was nine years old.

SPIN: People see political significance in your work.

L.L. COOL J: Really? Where? My audience comes to my shows to have a good time.

SPIN: The ladies love you.

L.L. COOL J: Whatever. I don't know.

SPIN: Aren't you sure, or is that just a posture?

L.L. COOL J: That was just something I said a long time ago, once. A girl said to me, "You swear that the ladies love Cool J?" And I said, "I swear." Then I made it L.L. because Ladies Love was just too egotistical. If they love me, they do, but I'm not going after that.

"Did you hear about the record, man?" L.L. asks Tony Rome triumphantly, slapping him on the back. The other performers are standing around talking about how great the record is, how great L.L. is, how great they all are. *Billboard* says the record is No. 1.

Tony corrects him: It's No. 1 on the *Black* charts, No. 6 Pop. "But that's real good, L.L. It means it's gonna be No. 1. It's got a bullet."

Bullet or not, L.L. is visibly disappointed. "You're a great man," says one of the members of Whodini, the group that played above L.L. last year. This year they open for him.

"I want it to be No. 1 Pop," L.L. finishes.

It's easy to see why the young girls love him. He's handsome, tall, and poised for competition; athletically built and composed. His walk is half march, half strut, with his head forward and down, like he's looking for something intimidating on the floor. Young girls love him in part because he's distant, inaccessible. Even the ladies who are lucky enough to be granted backstage passes stand a proper ten feet away, whis-

pering and giggling among themselves. Unless absolutely forced to do otherwise, he only talks to his fellow B-boys, passing all female attentions along to his teammates.

SPIN: You're real disappointed that the record's not a bigger hit?

L.L. COOL J: Yeah, but I thought about it, and even though I want to make continual strides to satisfy that audience, they love me because I did "I Need Love," and I might not ever make another record like that. If I don't, then I don't care. I want to satisfy my own audience. Those others—well, I can't have my heart set on them because they aren't loyal. Next time they might not be cool. I'll keep my cool audience.



Eben Roberts/Ezra Mower

"I'm not really sure what my demographics are. I've got to sit down with my manager and figure that out."

SPIN: Who's your cool audience?

L.L. COOL J: I'm not really sure what my demographics are. I've got to sit down with my manager and figure that out.

Ten thousand people, mostly black, mostly between the ages of seven and twenty-five, assemble at the University of New Orleans Lakefront Arena. Performing first is Def Jam's newest rap attraction, Public Enemy, who march onstage in army active sportswear. The guy in the middle, the one who isn't dressed like he just finished filming *Platoon*, speaks to the crowd. "There are people out there who don't want this show to go on. I'm talking about the fuckin' Klan, man."

The message falls on deaf ears. The logistics and the timing are off. "Why don't you shut up," the guy next to me calls out. "We came here to party."

After a short set, Public Enemy yield to Kool Moe Dee, who does a funny song about a meaningful one-night stand with a woman hot like a microwave: "Three days later, go see the doctor." The crowd loves him, and goes even higher with the following act, Doug E. Fresh. "L.L.'s gonna have a tough time beating that," the guy next to me says, to no one in particular.

Finally, an elaborately lit, massive boom box is lowered from the ceiling. It has a working cassette door, which opens and, to the delight of more than 5,000 screaming women, ejects L.L. Cool J. When the radio rises back up, L.L. stands in an exact replica of his old schoolyard, P.S. 119 in Queens, New York, which he chose so he could "feel like I was back at school, rappin'."

We bask in radio afterglow. L.L. raps the songs from *Bigger and Deffer*, his critical and commercial smash; he throws out candy during "Kanday," and asks the girls what they cooked for dinner tonight. "Do you cook Cajun?" he purrs. "I love the food here. Do you cook creole and crawfish tonight?"

The purring and the cooking talk has the boys un-

comfortable; they shift their bodies and focus on the floor. Preparing for the performance of "I Need Love," the stage crew sets up a leather loveseat flanked on either side by palm plants. L.L. raps the ballad subtly at first, then begins to caress his balls. He stretches himself across the sofa, his back to the audience, and simulates sexual intercourse. It's the most erotic thing anybody's ever done to a sofa in public. The sexual bravado, with its mild element of teenage perversity, sets the boys at ease again, and now they love L.L. also.

He exhorts the crowd to scream his name; they gladly obey. He tells them to make "L" symbols with their fingers, to light matches in the dark, to spell the names of his crew members; they couldn't be happier. "These are not fans," he says later. "I think of a fan as something you use to cool down. These people heat me up more. I call them my supporters."

SPIN: Why do rappers rub their balls?

L.L. COOL J: A lot of guys who aren't rappers rub their balls. With me it's a habit. I just grab it to be grabbing it. I grab my dick because it's there.

SPIN: How important are new sneakers?

L.L. COOL J: I buy new sneakers all the time, every

Echo & The Bunnymen

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Material Chronology: 1975-1987

week, every day. You gotta be fresh. I own at least two-hundred pairs. I travel with about fifty pairs. When I'm not busy, I go out and buy more.

SPIN: Maybe you should get a sneaker endorsement.

L.L. COOL J: Maybe in the future. I'd like it.

SPIN: White rock stars make lots of money, and when they flaunt their possessions, the fans get mad. You say stuff like, "Now I've got Porsche money," and everyone thinks it's cool.

L.L. COOL J: Look, I hate speaking about this racism stuff and I don't even have all the answers. But the way I see it, the majority, not all, but a lot of white people are middle- and upper-middle class. They have money and because so many in their class dress up, it's cooler to dress down. A lot of black people are seen to be lower-middle class and even poor, and it's

them. I don't mess around on the road, I get my girls in New York.

SPIN: Are women equal to you?

L.L. COOL J: Just like anybody else, a woman gets treated how she lets herself get treated.

SPIN: In your raps, you say some pretty tough things about girls. You've got this line about your rival's woman, and your name is tattooed on her ass.

L.L. COOL J: You know that cliché, behind every great man there's a woman and all that bullshit. I've got a lot of respect, but I also speak the truth. If I took his girl and she's sitting on my lap, I speak about it.

SPIN: What do women like about you?

L.L. COOL J: I don't know.

SPIN: What do you like in a girl?

L.L. COOL J: I like pretty, quiet girls.

"A lot of white people are middle- and upper-middle class. Because so many in their class dress up, it's cooler to dress down. A lot of black people are seen to be lower-middle class and even poor, and it's just cooler for them to dress up. It makes things even."

just cooler for them to dress up. It makes things even. You go to a high school where it's half black and half white, the white kids wear jeans with holes in them, while the black kids dress up. Everything evens out.

SPIN: When you performed "I Need Love," the guys in the audience were put off at first. Then you attacked the sofa and they relaxed.

L.L. COOL J: I'm showing them that I wasn't soft about it, that I'm cool. And they know exactly what I'm talking about.

SPIN: Who'd you write the song for?

L.L. COOL J: No one. I just felt romantic on that particular day. That's all.

SPIN: Just that day?

L.L. COOL J: Just that day.

The big problem after the show is getting all these guys back to the hotel. "The chief of police visited the show tonight," says Tony. "I don't want these boys hangin' around the French Quarter, getting arrested."

Arrested for what?

"Hangin' around. Run-D.M.C. comes here next week, and if there's any trouble, it reflects badly on them. The chief was just here asking about the security for their concert."

Amid hearty cheers and self-congratulations, the crews board the busses. Someone declares that the security problems are because "the Beastie Boys are assholes," but L.L.'s preoccupations are elsewhere. "I want those women that are hanging around on the busses to get lost. I'm real tired of this shit."

"Now is not the time to talk about it," Tony says, but L.L. repeats his annoyance. Tony keeps trying to shut him up, to make him aware of the invisible writer girl on the bus, but L.L. couldn't care less. Then he turns to Ecstasy and laughs. "Every time you see a skeezer that you like, she turns out to be a front."

SPIN: What's a skeezer and what's a front?

L.L. COOL J: Oh, you heard that? [laughs] That's when the fellas are talking about a pretty girl walking around the hotel and she doesn't want to give the guy nothing. She's a front. She ain't giving up nothing; she's just frontin'. That's why I don't mess with no groupies in the hotel, because they're all fronts. I don't even want to find out anyway, because Liberace died, and so did Rock Hudson. So I just look at them like they're all fronts, and that way it keeps me from messing with

SPIN: I guess you talk so much that there's no room for her to be noisy.

L.L. COOL J: I guess so.

SPIN: Did you ever hit a girl?

L.L. COOL J: I don't believe in hitting on women. It's disrespectful.

SPIN: If you treat women the way they deserve, does that mean that you treat bad girls badly?

L.L. COOL J: No. I ignore them.

SPIN: What's the nicest compliment you've gotten?

L.L. COOL J: I can tell you the funniest one. This girl comes up to me and says, "L.L., I love all your records except three."

SPIN: What's the worst thing?

L.L. COOL J: The loss of privacy and the envy.

SPIN: Is there a lot of competition between yourself and Run and the Beasties?

L.L. COOL J: I'm not having any competition with them.

SPIN: Are they having one with you?

L.L. COOL J: I don't know. They're groups. I'm trying to get my own thing. I don't care about nothing they have. I'm tryin' to make it to the top without steppin' on toes. I don't give two shits about what they're doing. I wish them well but I don't really give a damn. You don't ever wish anybody bad because when you try to dig one grave, you end up diggin' two.

We wait to board a 19-seater plane for Birmingham, Alabama. The pretty girl behind the ticket desk recognizes the group and asks for autographs. The guys line up chivalrously, happy to comply. All except L.L. He sits down, reads a magazine. Only when the girl asks him personally does he grant her his signature.

Before we board, Tony takes L.L. aside. After the conference, L.L. sits down next to me. "Ask all your questions now," he says.

SPIN: How did you lose your virginity?

L.L. COOL J: I had sex.

SPIN: Can you tell me any good sexual fantasies you've had?

L.L. COOL J: Sexual fantasies? Nah, I ain't got none. A sexual fantasy? [laughs] Are you serious? A sexual fantasy? That's real ill.

SPIN: Look, when you're a sex symbol, you've got to answer questions like this. Do you get along with your old girlfriends?

L.L. COOL J: Old girlfriends? You mean the ones over thirty years old? It's not like I'm that old where I have old girlfriends. I ain't been out there twenty years. I'm nineteen. What's an old girlfriend?

SPIN: But you express a lot of experience in your songs.

L.L. COOL J: Listen, there's no Yvette, there's no Kanday, and I wrote "I Need Love" for that minute. I believe all entertainers are schizophrenic. In that moment the personality changes. You write things, and then you come back. All these songs—it's just a picture.

SPIN: Are you afraid of anything?

L.L. COOL J: I'm afraid that this plane is gonna crash.

Rap's history is a relatively short one, but when L.L. Cool J declares that he's the "greatest rapper in the history of rap," he's uncharacteristically understating the matter. Other rappers might have attracted a more exclusive audience, maybe even—hard to imagine at this moment—a bigger audience, but no one has yet to inspire what he does with this audience. Adoration. No questions asked.

Perhaps the press's rush to see significance in his appeal is due to the political style of his approach: pure politician on the campaign trail. In person, he gets down with his "supporters," not as the mouth that roared, or even as a sexual hotbed of bad ideas, but as an ordinary kid who understands the appeal of his ordinariness. Apart from his small circle of B-boy friends, L.L. divides his fans/supporters into two camps. At his first promo appearance in Birmingham, he pointedly ignores the groupies, preferring to kiss the babies and pose and chat with children.

"We should let anyone under 14 come to the shows for free," he whispers to his manager. "Tell the children to go to the bus before we go on, and we'll give them tickets."

Tony doesn't reply. He looks distracted, like he's trying to figure out exactly how much money it might lose them.

He should run for mayor, I suggest.

"You should print that!" Tony says gleefully. "Print it. L.L. Cool J for president!"

Meanwhile, at least five radio stations are awaiting his visit. We listen to the announcements as a limo takes us to the first one. L.L. keeps peeking out the window, satisfied when passing car passengers recognize him. "Oh my God, it's him!" one girl yells. He immediately looks away.

The radio is playing "I'm Bad." Several seconds into the rap, a distinct "motherfucker" comes across; the guys burst out laughing. "I guess he just forgot to listen to it before he played it," L.L. concludes.

We stop for take-out food. Ecstasy wants a couple of pieces of chicken. "Fuck it," L.L. says. "Get a bucket." We settle for Burger King, and L.L. gets two orders of everything. As he balances the food on his lap, a woman sticks her head in the window, hands him an umbrella, and asks him to autograph it. Outside dozens more fans are gathering. L.L. checks them out only long enough to see if they're looking at him. It's like he's looking to see how well his record is selling.

"I hate this shit. I'm eating now," he says to the woman, while trying not to spill food on the umbrella. "Couldn't we do this later?" She looks like she's about to cry. "Okay, give it to me. But you know it would have been better if we'd done it later." He signs the thing and the girl goes away jubilantly with her score.

"You know, Tony, this is the part I hate about it. The part when you understand how little privacy you've got. They don't care about me at all. They'd ask me to sign an autograph if I was pissing in the toilet. They'd just slip the paper under the door and say, 'Sign.'"

"And a guy like me, I might just open the door, turn around, and ask, 'What's that you want?' and piss down their leg."

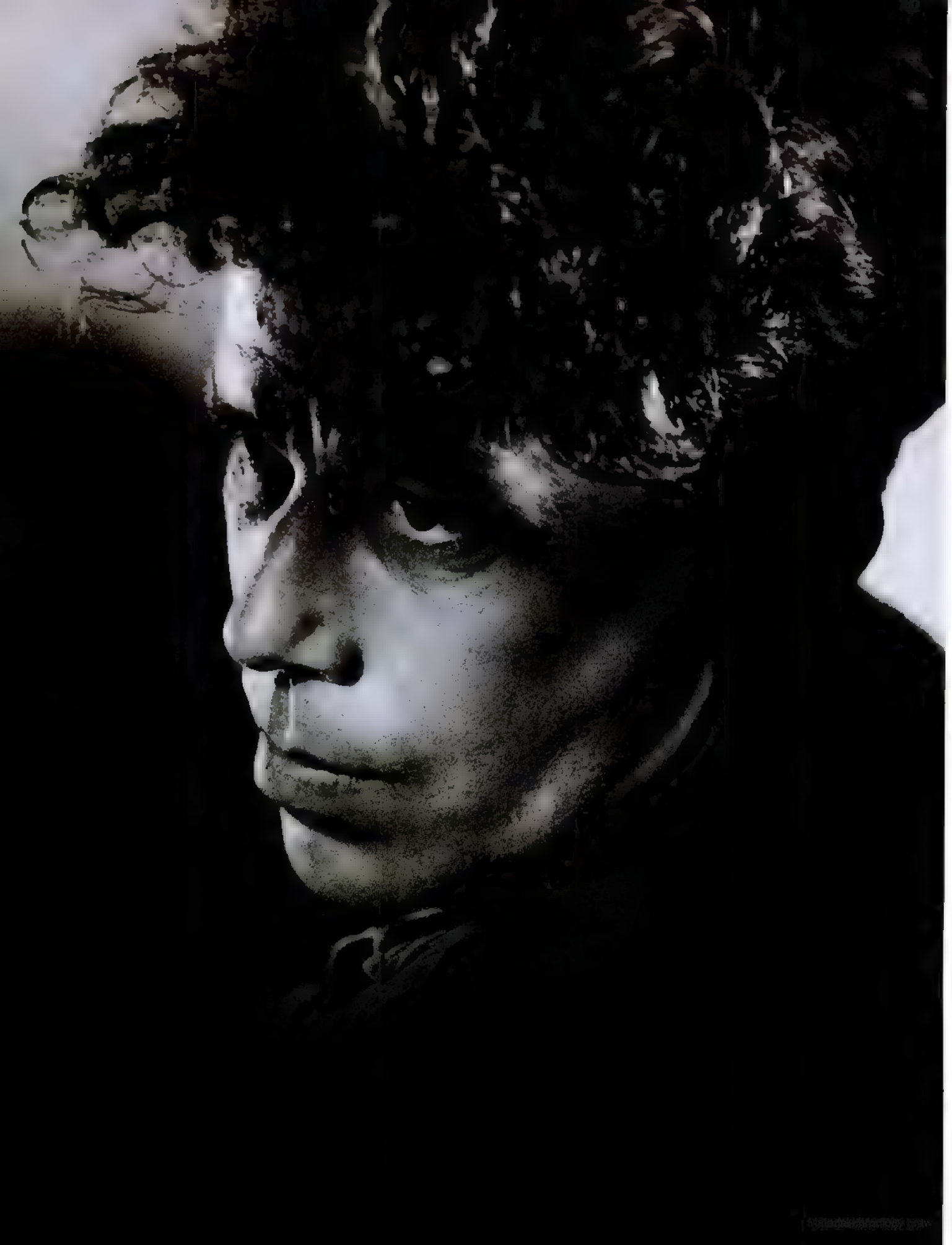
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Tom Waits saves cigarette coupons. Moths fly from his change purse. The keys fall off his piano. Business as usual.

Tosca, Tuesday night, late, Columbus near Broadway, San Francisco. This is a fine bar, a lovely bar, loud but not too loud. The jukebox plays scratchy opera music. Francis Coppola is in back where the tables and booths are. He's listening to Lauren Hutton tell a story and when he laughs, so does everybody else. Sam Shepard stands up from his stool at the bar to pay his tab. His MasterCard falls to the floor, unnoticed except by the red-head standing nearby. She puts her foot on top of it and carries on her conversation. Shepard leaves. Lauren Hutton leaves. Coppola and his people leave. Almost everybody leaves. The bartender works a rag across the bar, and in the doorway behind him we see someone who looks just like Tom Waits. He peers in, squints, rubbing his head. A cigarette butt, stepped on but still glowing, trails smoke across the floor, left to right. He steps through the smoke and goes to the jukebox, searches. He finds a quarter in his pants, punches buttons. A tenor yelps. It's "Nessun dorma," from Puccini's *Turandot*.

A pink paper cocktail umbrella, the kind that sprouts at the rims of colorful tropical drinks, blows across the floor at the foot of the stage, left to right, blown by an invisible wind.

Tom Waits wears black tie and tails, red socks, and railroad boots. A big barrel-bellied woman sits next to him, one leg draped over his knee. She's wearing a red flamenco dress and a black mantilla, and her name is Val Diamond. She has eyeballs painted on her eyelids.

She can see you with her eyes open; she watches you with her eyes closed. Polaroids are scattered on the stage at their feet.

TOM: I don't understand golf.

VAL: (mutters sympathetically)

TOM: It needs to have more sex. (Gleaming lightbulb appears directly over his head.)

Night golf!

VAL: Somebody won a lot of money golfing recently.

TOM: They get more money than boxers.

VAL: That doesn't seem right.

TOM: It doesn't seem right. Somebody gets beat up for an hour and somebody else hits a ball into a hole. Doesn't seem right.

From the floor, the DIRECTOR watches them through a little black lens, through his director's viewfinder. He hands the viewfinder to his assistant and walks off. The assistant stares carefully through the lens. Tom's zipper is at half mast.

It's dawn. Bats are hurrying back to the belfry, and below, one hand on the rope that rings the bell, Ken Nordine waits. Nordine, the word-jazzed Voice of God as heard on Levi's commercials, has something he wants to say. This time it's Tom Waits's words and Ken Nordine's voice; sometimes it's the other way around. Here's how to tell: Tom Waits's voice sounds like he gargles with gravel; Ken Nordine's sounds like he's selling three truckloads of soft margarine in handy reusable plastic tubs. There is no Devil (for our purposes here, at least), just God when he's drunk. Ken Nordine, God as we understand Him (for our purposes here), is not inebriated in the least, but he's willing to act (for our purposes here). He has something he'd like to say.

KEN NORDINE: (gritty voice)

It's like Jack Nicholson said to me one time—Continuity is for sissies.

We're in a nightclub, an empty nightclub. A nearly empty nightclub, with a camera crew setting up in the back. Ken Nordine's butter-flavored voice is the only light.

KEN NORDINE: For our purposes here, perhaps some explanation is in order. Perhaps not. Welcome, in any case, to Miss Keiko's Chi Chi Club.

We see the stage now, bulbs flashing in sequence across the proscenium.

KEN NORDINE: Proscenium. Butter-flavored proscenium.

We see Tom Waits in a tuxedo, slumped in a chair at the center of the stage.

KEN NORDINE: We have a purpose here. We are filming a video here, a video to accompany the tune "Blow Wind Blow," from Tom Waits's new album, *Frank's Wild Years*.

As Nordine speaks, we see Waits rise from his slump (as it were) and sit stiffly upright. His lips move precisely in time with Nordine's words, and his arms deliver florid gestures.

KEN NORDINE: But not merely accompany the tune. *Illustrate* it. But not merely *illustrate* it. *Illuminate* it.

A spotlight illuminates Val Diamond, seated next to Tom Waits, her left leg draped over his. She stares at us with big blue eyes. Her eyelids are shut tight. KEN NORDINE: But *Frank's Wild Years* is not merely an album. *Frank's Wild Years* is also a play, a stage production. *Frank's Wild Years* is two . . .

Val and Tom are holding breath mints in front of them. They click the packages together carefully.

KEN NORDINE: . . . two mints in one. And the video from

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in one. And the video from "Blow Wind Blow" is not merely a scene from the play, but an all-new and improved product—product—production. Tom is Frank, as it were, or perhaps he isn't, but in any case, he's a ventriloquist. He casts his voice into the rest of the cast. And the rest of the cast is ably portrayed by Val Diamond and a prosthetic leg. Prosthetic.

Waits reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a pack of those personal details that reveal so much about a character's character. He smokes pre-war Lucky Strikes in the Raymond Loewy-designed green pack. Or Chesterfields, named after W.C. Fields's favorite son. In truth, they're Raleighs, and he takes a dramatic drag off the cigarette, makes nonchalant expressions as he holds it in, then looks off in another direction as Val, the ventriloquist's dummy, exhales a white cloud. Waits takes the pack, crumples it, flicks it into the wastebasket hidden in the wings. A pause, another pause, and then he leaps up, dumping Val to the floor, and we see him bent over the wastebasket, digging around for the cigarette pack. He finds it, tears a square off the back.

TOM: (turns to the camera) I save the coupons.

He sits back down. His lips keep moving. KEN NORDINE: In truth, he doesn't smoke anymore. That would be too much like the old Tom Waits. And the old Tom Waits is over, done with, defunct, *finito*. Aesthetically, at least. He made his bed and he slept in it until it was past checkout time. Writing songs about dead-end kids on dead-end streets became a dead-end street. Damon Runyon demanded royalties.

Waits is making nonchalant expressions up on the stage. Val is staring baleful and blue-eyed, her eyelids clamped shut.

KEN NORDINE: And yet here we are in a nightclub, a nearly empty nightclub. Have you noticed the postage-stamp cocktail tables? The chains of garter snaps that decorate the walls? The black Naugahyde banquet booths? Once upon a time, this was Ann's 440 Club, where Lenny Bruce got that illustrious start of his. Ah, but that was long ago, and for more than 20 years this has been Miss Keiko's Chi Chi Club. Welcome. Have you met Miss Keiko yet?

A yellow spotlight comes on in the back of the club, illuminating a black and white photo. A signature in black felt-tip pen reads, "Miss Keiko—1969." She stands forever on the toes of one foot, gazing over her shoulder, lifting her long dark hair above her bare back. Her costume is brief, her breasts are tassel-tipped projectiles. Tom Waits stands nearby, appraising the photograph.

TOM: (gravel-voiced) If I was a girl, I'd want to look like that.

Francis Coppola's sergeant-at-arms drops by to let Waits know that Francis is dining next door at Enrico's. He's willing to wait until the video crew takes a lunch break if Tom would care to come over and talk. There's a part for him in an upcoming project. Waits is sitting at the Chi Chi Club bar with a guy called Biff, waiting for the crew to set up the shot. Miss Keiko gazes down at them from over her shoulder.

TOM: Vegas. She worked the big rooms in Vegas.

You know, I saw a guy go down with a heart attack at a crap table, and his wife was pounding on his chest, and the pit boss said, "New shooter coming up." I swear to God.

KEN NORDINE: (sounding godlike) Search me. Sounds like it could be true.

TOM: New dice, new shooter, keep it moving. Cold. Cold-blooded.

BIFF: How far away were you?

TOM: I was the new shooter.

BIFF: Were you wealthy when you left the table?

TOM: Nah. I gamble with scared money. I'm a tightwad. Moths in my change purse.

He gets up to get some cigarettes from the machine, although he doesn't smoke anymore. Moths burst forth from his change purse. He buys Raleighs. Doesn't smoke any.

TOM: So what do you think is suitable for manly footgear, Biff?

BIFF: Roman sandals. And beads to go with 'em.

TOM: I've been asking everyone I, uh, come into contact with, because I'm doin' a little survey. I'd say we're in a crisis in terms of American footgear.

BIFF: Slip-on loafers.

TOM: Nah, can't go that route. You can't go down that road, for down that road danger lies.

BIFF: How come?

TOM: I don't like the name. Loafers. For a guy that works as hard as you do, it's just not right.

BIFF: You could call 'em slip-ons, but . . .

TOM: That's even worse. That's worse than loafers.

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You wouldn't want me to call you a slip-on.

BIFF: You got a point there.

TOM: Points. I always gravitate toward points. Things are getting better—ten years ago, you couldn't find any points. Things are getting better, in shoes and music both.

Lunch comes, lunch goes. Coppola waits impatiently at Enrico's; Waits tells Biff of movie roles he's been offered. Coppola's fingers tap the tabletop.

TOM: Satanist cult leaders. The Iceman. I could've been the Iceman in *Iceman*.

BIFF: You turned that down?

TOM: Yep. Big mistake. Look where the guy that took it is today. I could've been the hitcher in *The Hitcher*, too.

BIFF: *Jesus Christ!* You turned that down? You could've had a career. You could be Boris Karloff by now.

TOM: Yep. Big mistake.
Coppola, *alfresco* at Enrico's, fumes silently. Fumes loudly. Fumes. Vows revenge. One week later, Waits wakes up in bed next to the oil-splattered head of a 350 Chevy. He shrieks.

A small pile of pink confetti blows across the floor in front of the stage, left to right, blown by a hand-held fan.

Tom Waits wears black tie and tails, red socks, and railroad boots. His sideburns are going grey. Val Diamond wears a red flamenco dress. Her ginger hair is piled high in Spanish columns. Her left leg is draped over his right knee. Black fishnet stockings.

TOM: You know who Dick Shawn is? Was?

VAL: The World's Second-Greatest Entertainer? The guy who did that show called "The World's Second-Greatest Entertainer"?

Although he doesn't smoke, smoke rises from an invisible Raleigh between his fingers. He taps his ashes absent-mindedly. They fall onto the brim of the top hat at his feet.

TOM: I did a little show with him, played the Wall Street Wino. It never aired. He had a dozen midgets on it. Thirteen.

A pause.

TOM: He died onstage. His son was in the audience. He was in the middle of a bit about death, and he threw himself to the stage in a simulated heart attack. And it was real. And everybody in the audience was laughing. Not a bad thing to hear in your last moment.

More ashes, real as life, fall into the hat; real smoke rises from the invisible Raleigh.

TOM: Good way to go, I guess. Maybe now they'll air the show.

The Chi Chi Club is empty, near empty. One chair is at the center of the stage, one chair is set in the center of the floor below. From the chair on the floor, we hear the voice of Ken Nordine.

KEN NORDINE: Curious as it is that Tom Waits abandoned his signature style of writing, it's every bit as intriguing that he jettisoned the very *sound* of his established style at the same time. Once known as something of a jazzed-down beat generation throwback, as the romantic street poet of the least romantic of unpoetic streets, as a narrative storyteller of the most talented sort, as a truly gifted liar, he suddenly and abruptly ceased spinning yarns. And as he did, his music itself came unraveled. Or if not unraveled, then . . .

A long pause. Long.

KEN NORDINE: Perhaps someone else would be better qualified to discuss what happened to the music of Tom Waits. Perhaps it would pay to introduce Harry Partch.

A small spotlight illuminates the chair onstage.

KEN NORDINE: Harry Partch, sadly deceased, was an American original. An eccentric, that is; a tinkerer, a free spirit, an inventor of instruments and of himself. A nut, in other words. A Californian, like Tom Waits,



Howard Rosenberg

and like Tom Waits, a man who lived the hobo's life long before he captured it in music. He invented his remarkable 43-tone musical scale, and he invented gorgeous and monumental instruments specifically for playing his odd and glorious music. You may have to grant him a certain grandiosity, a certain tendency toward the making of Major Pronouncements, a certain self-centeredness, a certain extreme certainty. Harry Partch received so little recognition during his life, and he required so much of it. He called his musical scale "just intonation," and he felt entirely justified in doing so.

The voice that comes from the chair onstage is deep and rugged and rigorously resonant. It sounds much like John Huston's acceptance speech upon his being unanimously voted God.

HARRY PARTCH: As I understand it, this young Tom Waits fellow has had some small contact with members of the ensemble that serves the noble purpose of preserving my music and my instruments, the Mazda Marimba, the Marimba Eroica, the Cloud Chamber Bowls, and all the rest. This contact, however limited, can't have hurt him, although it's impossible to say how much it has helped, since what I've heard of his stuff is no more than a literal-minded bastardization of the eternal principles behind my system of just intonation. He'd be best served to study a little closer if he cares to attempt any further homage. Still, there is some small sense of my own music's grandeur in

the young fellow's stuff. Like me, he's interested in the largest and the smallest of sounds, and like me, he's heard the music of the highway and the resonant clang of the beer bottle tapped with a church key. IMAGINE the sound of a hundred Chinamen beating spikes into the ground with nine-pound sledgehammers, laying the rails of the transcontinental railway! And the scream of the steam whistle as a locomotive flies over those same spikes. Imagine the snores of hobos sleeping in the open boxcars. Imagine the contrapuntal snores of the conductor comfortably bunked up in the caboose. IMAGINE THE THUNDER, the mighty prairie thunder that wakes them all from their slumbers! And imagine the raw COURAGE a composer would need to even ATTEMPT to create such sounds! I wish the young fellow a great deal of luck. I admire his theatricality.

At the back of the club, at the bar, a light glows. Tom Waits and the guy called Biff are back there, a beer bottle in front of each of them. Tom is not smoking, yet smoke rises from between two of his fingers. **TOM:** I traveled with a gas pump for years.

He tosses back a little beer. **TOM:** I still have nightmares where the whole crowd is moving toward me and then the keys are falling off the piano and the curtain rips and my shoe comes off and I'm crawling toward the wings and the crowd is moving toward me, hurling insults at me. And car parts. I played cow palaces, rodeos, sports facilities, hockey arenas with the ice beneath cardboard. It cools off

the place. It's alright in August, but it's a bitch in February. But if you can appreciate the rich pageantry of it...

Biff tosses back a little beer.

TOM: Never have your wallet with you onstage. It's bad luck. You shouldn't play the piano with money in your pocket. Play like you need the money.

Tom tosses back a little beer.

TOM: I don't play the piano much anymore. I don't compose on it. It's hard. Because sometimes it feels like it's all made out of ice. It's cold. It's square, so much about it is square, you know, and music is round. And so sometimes I think it puts corners on your stuff.

Tom and Biff toss back a little beer. Behind them, we see a single chair and a single spotlight on the stage, and now we can hear that Harry Partch has never stopped talking.

"I don't play the piano much anymore. It's square, so much about it is square, and music is round."

HARRY PARTCH: (from afar) ... the wrongheadedness of the chromatic scale of the Western world and the deleterious effect it has had on untold generations of innocent ears ... a gang of Irishmen headed due west with nine-pound sledgehammers of their own

A pink balloon blows across the floor in front of the stage, left to right.

Tom Waits wears black tie and tails, red socks, and railroad boots. Val Diamond wears a red dress and a black top hat. "Blow Wind Blow" is playing frantically in the background, sung by Alvin of the Chipmunks. When the soundman has re-cued it, the take begins.

A clapboard claps. A pink balloon blows across the floor, left to right.

TOM: Welcome to Miss Keiko's Chi Chi Club. It's showtime!

Two pump organs, an alto horn, a glockenspiel. A gravel voice grumbles, singing. The voice comes from Val's mouth, and her eyes, clamped closed, stare blue ahead. Tom Waits, ventriloquist, nonchalant, takes a deep, dramatic drag on his cigarette; smoke puffs from Val's mouth. Her lips grumble his song. He unscrews her wooden leg, pulls a pint of liquor from within it, swigs. He caps the bottle, puts it back, screws her leg back on. His cigarette rests between her fingers, his song sings off her lips. He takes his hand out from behind her back to scratch his head, and she slumps, but he catches her before she falls. The song grumbles toward an end, and as it ends, she pulls a dry-cell battery out of his back. He slumps, slumps and flops. He twitches in rigor mortis. Confetti falls free from his hand, gathers in a little pile. A hand-held fan blows it, left to right.

Wrap. The crew ascends to the stage, leaves nothing behind but a steamer trunk and a sousaphone. Tom sits on the trunk; the sousaphone sits on its side. A member of the crew grabs it and leaves.

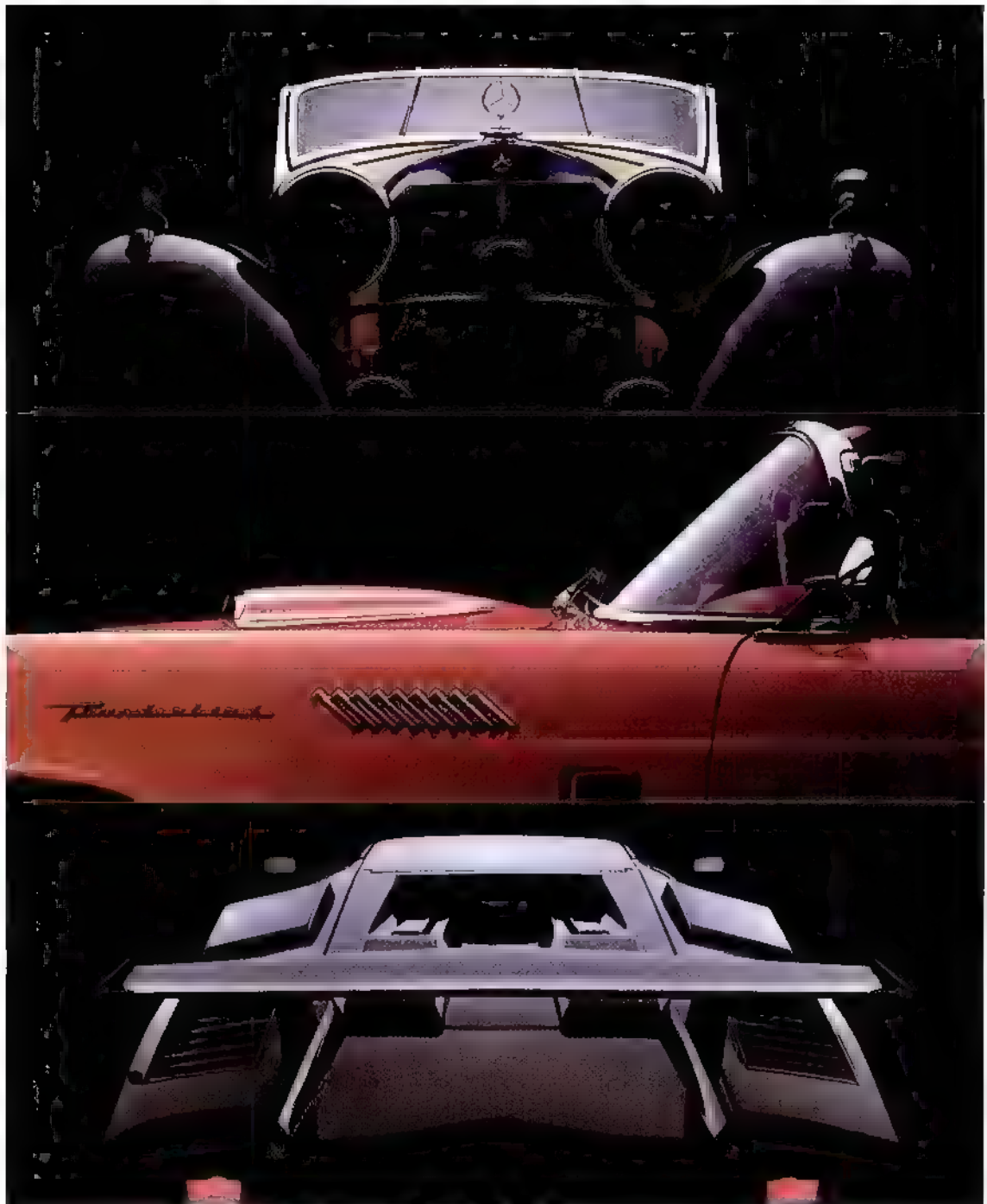
TOM: Aw, bring the sousaphone back.

It comes back. Waits climbs inside it, adjusts the mouthpiece. It makes hideous bleats, like someone is forcing it to watch its mother being turned into a coffee table. Waits's cheeks puff out, his face turns red. He hoists it off like a weight lifter. He leaves the stage with it under his arm, his tuxedo tails flapping behind. He puts his little finger in his ear and wrings it vigorously.

TOM: What should I do with this thing?

No answer. "Nessun dorma," from Puccini's *Turandot*.

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TREADING WATERS



Fourteen years after its release, *The Dark Side of the Moon* is still on the *Billboard* charts. For an even longer time, the world has been in the dark about Pink Floyd's cofounder, songwriter, and former lead singer, Roger Waters. He was born in Cambridgeshire, England, in 1943, and went on to study architecture at the Regency Street Polytechnic in London. There, along with fellow students Nick Mason and Rick Wright, he played in a band that went by the names Sigma 6, the Meggadeaths, and

the (Screaming) Abdabs. After Waters's childhood friend Syd Barrett joined, the band changed its name to Pink Floyd, a combination of Barrett's two favorite guitar heroes, Pink Anderson and Floyd "Dipper Boy" Council. They soon acquired a reputation as the house band for the London underground scene of the late 1960s, similar to the role the Grateful Dead played in San Francisco.

In 1968, Pink Floyd started producing soundtracks for such films as *The Committee*, *More*, and Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*. That's when Waters got

Roger Waters has a new concept. It isn't called Pink Floyd.

Article by Scott Cohen

the idea to make concept albums, like 1973's *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Lavishly theatrical stage shows followed, like the May 1973 London production of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, during which a plane flew through the auditorium and crashed onstage; the *Wish You Were Here* concert in 1975, in which two camouflaged Spitfires flew over the Knebworth stage; the *Animals* premiere concert in 1977, with its inflatable pig that soared above the audience; and *The Wall* performances of 1980, in which a brick wall was built across the stage.

The wall turned out to be more than symbolic: The band members began to grow distant from each other and, in 1983, Pink Floyd recorded their last album with Waters as a member, prophetically titled *The Final Cut*. Right now there is a dispute between Waters and the other members about who has the rights to the name and assets of Pink Floyd, including the various stage effects used in the past, a litigation that probably won't be resolved until at least next year.

In the meantime, Roger Waters has just released his second solo effort. *Radio K.A.O.S.* is a concept album about a human vegetable named Billy, who lives in L.A. and communicates to the outside world via radio waves. The album features Jim Ladd as a K.A.O.S. renegade disc jockey fighting a losing battle against format-controlled radio; Billy is the unusual phone-in listener. Jim fears that market-research-based programming will lead to the depersonalization of radio; Billy fears that the misuse of radio waves is bringing the Earth to the edge of destruction. Ironically, in real life, Jim Ladd's former radio station, KMET in Los Angeles, recently changed its format from rock 'n' roll to New Age.

GOT MY RADIO ON

When I was a kid I used to lie in bed at night and listen, hour after hour, to the radio, either to American Forces Network, which used to come from Holland, I think, or to Radio Luxembourg. In a solitary way, the radio station was the first thing I established a kind of relationship with, outside of my family or school. It's an area where you're allowed to be whatever you are or whatever you want to be, and it's an area where you can have it on or you can switch it off. You can grow with it, go with it, or go away with it, so it's an easy medium in that sense. It's not bombarding you or forcing you into corners, and yet you're getting other people's ideas through it, more so than with television.

There's no image on the radio. Radio is much easier to concentrate on. You can't watch TV in the dark, because it makes it light. Radio can be a kind of a blindfold; it's a lot more intimate than TV.

FOR THE RECORD

The first records I bought were "Singing the Blues," by Guy Mitchell; an awful song called "Priscilla," by Frankie Vaughan; and a selection from *The Mikado* by Gilbert and Sullivan. Then I stopped buying singles. These are 78 r.p.m.'s I'm talking about; I never got into 45's. I didn't start buying records again until I started to buy albums a couple of years later. Then I got into blues: Leadbelly, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, some Dixieland jazz, Kid Ory, King Creole, Johnny Dodds, and some more contemporary blues things like Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Sleepy John Estes, Sonny Boy Williamson. Then I went into a whole modern jazz thing, like Art Blakey, Coleman Hawkins, Dizzy Gillespie; everything but rock 'n' roll. I didn't get into rock 'n' roll until people first started using reverb on electric guitars, which was a very seductive sound. That was the first time in England that anything sounded vaguely interesting. Everything before that had been American. Then came the Beatles, the Stones, and the Who. Having listened to who the Stones had listened to did not put me off the Stones; I could have been very snobby about it, as I had been pretty snobby about a lot of pretend-blues bands, but I didn't feel the Stones were pretending. They weren't snobby about it, so why should I be? The most recent records I bought were *So*, which I bought last year, when it came out, and *Graceland*.

PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC

The first time Pink Floyd came to America, in 1968, our first live show was Winterland, in San Francisco, where we were third on the bill to Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company, and Richie Havens. There was a really solid light show set up in the place, and we were used to travelling around, dragging our own bubbly slides and bits of film with us, so it was a real eye-opener, because it was much more sophisticated than anything we were doing. But the psychedelic label that we had, which really came more from the connection with psilocybin, and then acid, and the idea of music being mind-expanding in a similar way to those

hallucinogens, I personally think is nonsense. It was a convenient label for journalists to apply to people who used bubbly visuals. I've only used psychedelics twice in my life, and on both occasions it was after our music got that label. The first time it was absolutely wonderful. It was on a Greek island, in very idyllic surroundings, and I don't know how much I did, but it seemed to go on forever. It was very powerful, and strange. Whether or not it affected my music, I have no idea. I did some more acid a couple years later, but in a vastly smaller quantity, and I remember crossing Eighth Avenue in New York, trying to get to Smiler's to buy myself a sandwich and a bottle of milk, and I got stuck halfway across the road. I never did anything again.

BANDS I WISH I HAD BEEN IN

I wish I had been in Cream, because they had been such a turn-on when I saw them as a kid: the curtains parted and there was a big bank of Marshall gear and it was an all-enveloping, loud, powerful, bluesy experience; the Who, because it must have been pretty weird to have been in that band for those many years; Buffalo Springfield, for purity and plaintiveness; the Band, for being part of the Big Pink revolution, where the whole way of making records was changed forever in a single drum sound; and the Rolling Stones, because they were sexy.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

I don't know why *Dark Side of the Moon* has been on the charts so long. I know it's not just because there are good tunes on it, because there's been masses of albums over the years with good tunes. It must have something to do with either some ideas expressed by the music and the lyrics together, or some idea embodied in the words. Somebody once told me it's comforting to people because it gives you permission to feel it's alright to be going crazy. Or maybe because it's a musical version of that kind of truism, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." There's all this stuff in it about how this is your life and it's all happening now, and as each moment passes, that's it. It talks about the illusion of working towards ends which might turn out to be fool's gold. The philosophy that's embodied in it has got a little meaning for a lot of human beings. It deals with the big picture. It says, I don't care if I get accused of melodrama or megalomania or being shallow or stating the obvious or whatever. This is what I feel. There's a

line in "Time," for instance, that says, "No one tells you when to run, you missed the starting gun." I mean, I was 28 years old before I suddenly realized that I wasn't going to wake up one morning and find that now was the moment, that now my life was going to start. I realized that it was happening for a long, long time without me noticing it.

TEERING OFF

An historic photograph I'd like to have been in was one with James Braid, when he won the Open in 1906. He, Harry Vardon, and J.H. Taylor dominated golf from the turn of the century until Bobby Jones came along. The wonderful thing about golf is, you can't play the game if you try. Well, some people can, but I can't. The harder I try, the worse I get. I have a natural tendency, if faced with a problem, to bunch myself up into a shape that makes the problem impossible to overcome. In my songwriting, I manage to relax and allow the song to come out of me, in spite of my natural tendency to tense up. The reason I don't play golf better than I do is because I cannot find the root to that naturalness to let it come out of my body. I interpose my desire to win between my ability and the end result, which is what golf is.

ANIMALS

The *Animals* tour was the biggest embarrassment in my life, because it was only about money and mystification. This is what *The Wall* was all about, about my response to what I perceive is the mystification of the relationship between the performer and the audience in a stadium, who can't



Adrian Lloyd

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"Pink Floyd probably went on 10 years longer than we should have, because of the convenience of the brand name and the money and the success."

hear the music, and backstage, where all you hear is, "Do you know how much we grossed?" It took a long time, and a lot of money went into my bank account, before I started finding it unbearable. I didn't immediately. It was something that I learned over a couple of weeks.

THE WALL

I don't know if *Dark Side of the Moon* was our best work. I like *The Wall* a lot. Both those records I thought were very complete. But there's stuff on *The Final Cut* that I felt was more moving than anything on *The Wall*. There's a little section on that record, that starts off about the armed forces coming back from the Second World War, that I'm very proud of. After *The Final Cut*, which there was an awful amount of trouble in the band about, Gilmour went on record as saying, more or less, "There you are, I'm right. It was a piece of shit and nobody bought it." That's his opinion, he's entitled to it. But to

judge stuff by sales figures is really nonsense. I was in the grocery shop one day and a woman, who I knew very slightly, came up to me. She said she had listened to *The Final Cut* and had been very deeply moved by it, and that her father had been killed in the Second World War, and how she had understood, and that it had reduced her to tears, and that she had reconciled some unfinished business between herself and her dead father. I put my potatoes in the bag and walked out of the shop, got in the car and thought, that's good enough.

SONGS I WISH I HAD WRITTEN

"You Are So Beautiful," by Billy Preston and performed by Joe Cocker; "Georgia on My Mind," written by Hoagy Carmichael and sung by Ray Charles; "Isolation," by John Lennon; and Dylan's "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands," though if I were to list 50 songs I wish I had written, very few of them would not be by Dylan or Lennon.

NO BRIGHT LIGHTS, NO BIG CITY

If I were to build a city, made up of parts of other cities, and if I were going to spend any time there, I would include the skyline of Florence, because I love the colors of that city, and I'd make sure there was a good dog track. In fact, I'd rebuild the dog track at Slough, which was the best dog track before they tore it down. I would not have the Eiffel Tower, but I would have Niagara Falls, and the Grand Canyon as well, and maybe Aspen, Colorado, without all the people, just the ski lifts and the snow. Maybe I'd have the River Test running through it, which is a trout stream in England, because I love watching other people fly-fishing, people who are very good at it. I'm not very good at city activities, really, which is why my city would have mainly outdoor places.

THE FINAL CUT

There are those who would contend that the band hasn't broken up, and that it's out there. But if you're like me, you believe that the band was something that no longer exists. It no longer exists because we grew in different directions. A band can only be a band if the people within it have some common ground, musically, politically, or philosophically. They need to have a certain amount of common ground in all those areas, just like in a marriage, and we no longer did. Sometimes you go on in a marriage because of the kids, and bands go on longer than they should. Pink Floyd probably went on ten years longer than we should have, because of the convenience of the brand name and the money and the success and all of those other things that come with being in a successful band.

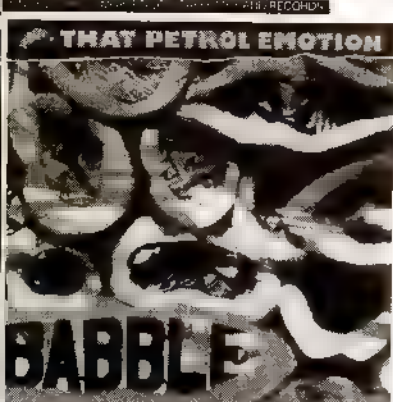


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KINGS OF THE B's

Yesterday I read that Sergio Leone is making a movie for \$100 million. Steven Spielberg is going to raise the eight zeros and the big One. I think tonight I'll go out and see *Ishtar*, if it's still playing. I don't care if it cost \$50 million, it might be funny anyway. No, wait a minute: something is coming out of my television set. Something strange. Something cheap. "It was something so hideous, so gruesome, so frightful, it could only dwell in one place—among the slippers and the pajamas in the grizzly depths of your closet. The entire United States Marine Corps could not stop it. The most sophisticated modern weaponry and firepower could not stop it. Fantastic cinematic special effects could not stop it. . . We must act immediately. Destroy all closets!"

Yeah, maybe tonight I'll just stay home and watch *Monster in the Closet* again. After all, I'm on a budget, so why not watch a film that is? And *Monster in the Closet* is one of the greatest, most sophisticated low-budget monster movies ever made. It's like if Jacques Demy had gotten his hands on a property like *Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman*. I can watch it over and over again.

Then again, I might want to watch *Surf Nazis Must Die*. When California is hit by a catastrophic earthquake, the beaches are taken over by a brutal gang of outlaw surfers, the Surf Nazis. They terrorize children and rob senior citizens. But they go too far when they murder a good samaritan named Leroy. Leroy's Mama, a 300-pound black senior citizen who rides a Harley and packs a gun that will "blow a honky's head off at ten paces," singlehandedly mops up the Surf Nazis. "She's tough. She's dangerous. She's all woman. She's Leroy's Mama. And as long as she's alive, the Surf Nazis must die."

Or, after a hard day of reading about the garbage barge, I might want to watch *Toxic Avenger*, about somebody who really does something about the ecology. Melvin is the pathetically nerdy janitor of the Tromaville Health Club, a club of pathologically sadistic bodybuilders who make Melvin the butt of continual cruel jokes. One day, after a particularly humiliating sexual prank, Melvin leaps from the window of the club. As Tromaville, New Jersey, happens to be the toxic waste capital of the United States, there happens to be a truck full of the stuff parked beneath the window, and Melvin plummets headfirst into a barrel of churning, bubbling, steaming green day-glo waste. He catches fire and runs through the streets of Tromaville to the home of his mother.



The moguls at Troma are the new emperors of exploitation. And they plan to save the world.

Article by Glenn O'Brien

There suddenly begins a bizarre transformation. He himself bubbles and churns until he mutates into a hideously scarred, enormously powerful hulk, the Toxic Avenger.

The Toxic Avenger literally cleans up Tromaville. Wherever he strikes, he leaves his trademark—a mop in the mouth of his criminal victims. He scrambles brains with a milkshake mixer, he french fries one hood, and bakes another in a pizza oven, serving up fast justice. He also finds the love of a blind girl, whom he rescues from rape in a burger joint. It's a great American success story.

Who needs *Porky's XIV* when you've got *Class of Nuke 'Em High*? "Welcome

to Tromaville High, the average American high school with one exception. It's located only one mile away from a nuclear power plant. They said it was 100% safe, but they were wrong. Yes, at Nuke 'Em High strange things are happening. The Honor Society has changed from a group of clean-cut preppies to a vicious gang of cretins." Yes, it's readin', ritin', and radiation. The teen protagonist smokes a radioactive reefer, knocks up his cheerleader squeeze, and after her pregnancy—more like nine hours than nine months—she gives birth to a slug-like amphibian that runs amok in the school's plumbing. While other high-school comedies skirt the burning issues that fry the brains

of today's teens, *Nuke 'Em High* scarfs them up and barfs them out as if the *Breakfast Club* had blown lunch.

What do *Monster in the Closet*, *Toxic Avenger*, *Surf Nazis Must Die*, and *Class of Nuke 'Em High* have in common? They're all distributed by the fastest growing, weirdest thinking, slickest talking, lowest paying major motion-picture studio in the world, Troma, Inc.

Well maybe major is not exactly precise. But Troma is fast turning minor into major by showing that in today's film industry smaller may be a lot better. Troma is the new king of cheapies. It's the heir to the sensibility of Roger Corman and American International Pictures, who genetically altered the course of film history (not to mention history history) in the '60s. American International brought us bikers, babes, beaches, Vincent Price, disgusting creatures of all stripes and textures, things from other worlds, Jack Nicholson, Edgar Allan Poe, art movies from the Continent, *Little Shop of Horrors*, 3-D spectacles, and a cast of hundreds photographed to look like thousands.

American International had a vision, and Troma has a vision that looks like it wears the same prescription. Troma makes the films that the big guys don't dare to make. Films like *Demented Death Farm Massacre*, *Sizzle Beach USA*, *Curse of the Cannibal Confederates*, *I Was a Teenage TV Terrorist*, *Zombie Island Massacre*, starring Rita Jenrette, *Story of a Junkie*, filmed in New York's East Village with real junkies! These are the films of Troma.

Troma Films is headquartered in the Troma Building, just a short, exciting walk from Times Square. It's a bustling facility, with editing rooms and distribution offices. The walls are lined with wild posters for the 70 movies that Troma distributes. When *Nature Calls You Gotta Go* looks remarkably like the glamorous *Cone with the Wind* poster, the one with Rhett, shirt torn open, holding Scarlett, bosom heaving, in his arms. Except that here it's not Clark Gable but a bear sweeping the girl off her feet.

There are about 40 Troma employees rushing about, adding up grosses, arranging video sales, cutting trailers, doing all the things that a studio does. Sitting in the front office, their desks facing each other, shouting into telephones, is the Troma team itself, Lloyd Kaufman (Yale '69) and Michael Herz (Yale '71). They work those phones, calling around the world, leaving no stone unturned in their search for some-

moving images

"At Nuke 'Em High strange things are happening. The Honor Society has changed into a vicious gang of cretins."

thing crawling underneath it. When they put down the phones to talk to each other, they take on a familiar brother-act routine, goofing on each other and passing questions around like a basketball.

Kaufman and Herz are veteran filmmakers. They've both done it all. Raised money, operated the camera, directed, acted, schlepped, written, edited, sold, hustled, the works. Kaufman worked as assistant to director John Avildsen (*Rocky*), and he was the associate producer on *The Final Countdown*, a sci-fi World War II drama. And he appeared in both pictures.

"In *The Final Countdown* I'm in a scene with Kirk Douglas, Martin Sheen, and Lloyd Kaufman," says Lloyd Kaufman. "It's an excellent scene."

Michael Herz: "And in *Rocky* he's the original bum."

Kaufman produced, starred in, wrote, and directed a successful independent feature—*The Battle of Love's Return*—in 1971. Kaufman and Herz both worked on *Sugar Cookies*, with Monique Van Vooren and Mary Woronov. Oliver Stone was associate producer on that one. They found that their low-budget movies were suddenly returning their investment, so they plowed the money back into making more movies and expanding their production and distribution operations.

They recently came back from Cannes, and they're red hot. Troma was a big hit at the Festival this year, especially with *Surf Nazis Must Die*. When it was screened at Cannes, police surrounded the theater because of the mobs of kids it attracted.

Kaufman: "We use the Cannes Film Festival as a learning center. I don't go there to sell. We have people to sell for us. I'm more of an artist. Now Michael..."

Herz: "I go there to sell. We also buy. I go there to acquire distribution rights to films from all over the world."

Kaufman: "But more importantly, we see what is going on in the world of movies. We talk to everyone and find out what people are interested in, what they're tired of. It was out of the Cannes Film Festival that we got ideas for several of our most important movies. I can safely say that the germ of the idea for *Toxic Avenger* came from talking to people at Cannes. As a result of Cannes, we learned that a film that combined our style of comedy with some science fiction and horror could indeed be something appreciated around the world. It might bring people together. It might be a contributing factor to world peace."

Herz: "Excuse me for interrupting, but when do I get to say that we turned down Madonna for a part in *First Turn*

On five times? That's the shame of my career. She was supposed to play the part of a Jewish American Princess who was going to summer camp, so she was not quite right for it. But she had a lot of pizzazz and talent, and I made a terrible error."

Kaufman: "But on the other hand, Kevin Costner was in a film we distribute, *Sizzle Beach USA*. He's terrific, too."

Herz: "Young actors like to work for us because our movies get out there and are seen. They have a chance to be in a movie that people have heard of."

Kaufman: "What's interesting about Troma is that we're one of the oldest independent and distribution companies in America. Even though we hack around a lot we're very serious about the movies we make. We do want to bring out new young talent."

"Five or six years ago drive-ins were our meat and potatoes. There are very few drive-ins left. Real estate has gotten very valuable, so rather than have one big drive-in, the theater owner thinks, 'I can have 20 screens here,' and that's exactly what they've done. There's very little drive-in business left in the world. Sad but true. Today our movies play the same theaters as the Hollywood movies. If a shopping center has a six-screen complex they like to have a Troma movie playing there, maybe in April or October, and they get two or three good weeks out of one of their screens. They make more money on a movie like *Toxic Avenger* or *Class of Nuke 'Em High* than they do from nine out of ten Hollywood

movies. That's because we give them better terms and people show up for our movies. We have a very loyal following."

Like American International before them, Troma loves sensationalism. But they also have artistic aspirations. Troma provided the production services for Louis Malle's *My Dinner with Andre*, and they've been working on some classy stuff of their own, such as John Hanson's *Wildrose*, the story of an abused working-class wife in a Minnesota mining town. Roger Ebert has already called it "one of the most ambitious films yet in the new movement."

Ambition, yeah, that's the ticket. They want to save the world with movies that make them millions. Kaufman sits back in his chair and looks out over Ninth Avenue. "You know, there hasn't been a war now for over 20 years and I believe Troma is responsible for that," he says.

On the other side of the room, Herz bristles.

"Hey, what about that Iraq thing? Iran-Iraq? That's not a war?"

"Well, that's because Iraq did not buy Troma movies. Neither Iran nor Iraq has purchased one Troma movie. Every country that has purchased Troma movies has been war free for many years now."

If there's any hope for capitalism, it's exactly that kind of ambition. Spreading peace through high-grossing, low-costing motion pictures. It's a boffo thought whose time has come. ☺

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Shooter Hugler

MELLENCAMP from page 39

Even though Don and Dave live in California, they've been in Bloomington long enough to have heard of Dr. Bop. Someone tells us they get 90 to 100 percent of the door (the bar makes its money on the drinks). We discuss what this means. It's \$5 to get in. We estimate how many people are there and someone says they play here a lot, usually on weekends, and get about 1,500 to 2,000 people, which would have to break some law. Dave says he's heard they play four or five nights a week, including parties and weddings. Based on estimates and inaccuracies, we try to derive what they earn perennially touring. Mike has decided it's \$20,000 a week and is mulling this over to himself as if it is true. The others conclude different figures and also presume them fact and for the rest of the evening refer to them seriously. Guessing would have been more scientific.

Mike and I run into the dark-haired sister between sets. She is funny, pretty, and bright-eyed. She tells us their dry cleaning bills are \$10,000 a year, and that she wants to get into singing on commercials. Wistfully, she says she's tired of having beer thrown on her.

7.

The next day, I not only saw Seymour, I saw it when John Mellencamp was growing up.

He had recently advertised in the local papers for

people to lend him old home movies for use in his videos. Someone had compiled the submissions onto one tape and so now we sat on his living room floor viewing the fabric of his past.

The footage was mostly of Seymour and the cars and fashions dated it, some clips as far back as the mid-'50s but most of it spanning the '60s. It was all silent. There were several clips of kids at high school activities, such as an assembly celebrating the basketball team making it to the state finals. In that one, in choppy black and white and sometimes washed-out gray frames, teenagers appeared like ghosts parading through the cemetery of his memory. Some remembered, some not, some remembered so deeply you felt he was going to reach across the floor and the 20 years and touch them. He pointed out old girlfriends and rewound and replayed those bits. He went out with the really pretty girls.

There were more high school scenes: anonymous lunch room galas and several testaments to the senior parade, a quaint, sanctioned act of nose-thumbing as graduating seniors walked up and down in front of the school building carrying signs that said things like "Free at last." When Mellencamp thought he saw one boy giving the finger as he passed the camera, he backed up the film to see. "Ah, no, he didn't," he smiled. "He was a good boy."

One clip shows a party at his mother's office, for someone who has just had a child. All the men have the same haircut and are in dress shirt and tie. The light and the motion of the black and white film is exactly that of a dream. He doesn't see his mother. Maybe she wasn't there that day, but then again, he's not sure he hasn't missed her, failed to recognize her. Then finally she flits briefly into the wobbly picture.

He plays that part back and she looks fleetingly into the camera, smiling. "She was a good looking woman," he says, more to himself than to me.

People float onto the screen who he hasn't seen for years, suspended at the time and age he remembers them. Others are seen out of the period he knew them, so sometimes he can't recognize them although he knows they're there, right in front of him, disguised in the costume of their own lives. He replays the same nondescript scenes trying to find certain people. "There, maybe that's her. Wait. I don't know. Maybe. Could be." But some souls are just too far across the abyss for him to reach.

8.

Back to the studio, and this time it really is from scratch. For an hour and a half, the group sits around the studio, on chairs and on the floor and listens to Woody Guthrie songs. John has brought a cassette of selected tunes, and a half dozen LPs, which get passed around as everyone studies the jackets and reads the credits and liner notes, while the cassette plays and John tells Rick to fast forward as soon as he's decided he doesn't want to do the one they're listening to. After one run-through, there are four or five solid possibilities. "This Land Is Your Land" isn't even a consideration, someone else will do that. One song played somewhere in its middle reminds me of "House of the Rising Sun" and I say so; three stunned faces turn to me and in chorus say: "It is!"

Looking for inspiration, or just a breather, John hands

"Jimmy Swaggart, I think he's sincere but boy he sure does a rotten job. I even heard him put down Alcoholics Anonymous! I don't think God appreciates that."

Rick Ry Cooder's album of covers, *Into the Purple Valley*, and tells him to play "Vigilante Man," a Guthrie classic. The track is transcendental. Cooder's bottleneck slide guitar and the vocals are so good it's haunting. "Can that son-of-a-bitch play that fucker or what? Whoahh," exclaims Toby Myers, who's feeling better. "He's fucking ridiculous," says Mike. John plays it again. It's perfect. It doesn't need another duplication.

By committee agreement, they decide on "Do Re Mi," a favorite from the early balloting. It's a song about migrating west:

*Lots of folks back east they say
Is leavin' home every day
Beating the hot ol' dusty roads
To the California line
Across the desert sands they roll
Gettin' out of that ol' dust bowl
They think they're going to a sugar bowl
But here's what they find
Now the police at the point of entry say
You're number 14,000 for today*

They huddle around like last night, only closer, so they're almost on top of each other. Daylight is still coming through the window and they could be sitting on a screened porch somewhere in the fading evening. They are playing; they already have the tune. They start up gingerly, it catches like a flame and they are into it. It is natural and alive and magical. John stops them and the spell disappears. He corrects or changes something. "No, no, do it like *this*, try *this*," and he strums out the melody, his head bent over his wooden guitar, bobbing slightly. He changes the accent of the chords. The others pick it up and join back in and the spell comes back into the room. Rick has listened to the song on the headphones and written down the lyrics, so now John rehearses the singing as they continue to play. His voice brings the words to life with the same wryness Guthrie had but a richer, more expressive voice:

Now the police at the port of entry say
You're number fourteen thousand for today
Ohhh, if ya ain't got the doe-ray-mee, folks
If ya ain't got the doe-ray-mee. . .
And the music rises and swirls like powder around

his singing: Lisa's violin dances and twirls in it, the accordion sound sways with it and Toby plucking his stand-up bass thumps along with it like a foot tapping in time.

It takes very little time to record; they have it on the third serious take. Everyone, standing, listens excitedly to the playback, except Mellencamp, who ain't going to call it over 'til it's over. It sounds really good. It sways and dips perfectly. And when John's voice goes around the curves, he takes them at the right speed and accelerates on the straightaways.

So it really is over, now. The album, technically finished a couple of weeks earlier, is now symbolically finished, like a season. The band wants to go out and celebrate, and they want John to go too, but he says no. Lisa says they should have champagne. Mike and Don discuss the difficulties of getting champagne in Bloomington at 10 o'clock at night. There are easier quests. Everyone again asks John to come but he doesn't want to go. He's going to go home.

As we say goodbye, I ask him if there's any last thing he'd like to set the record straight on.

"No, not really. I don't know—I've always been honest. I've never kissed ass. That's all I can say."

9.

At a bar called J. Arthurs, we take up a long table and comprise just about all the patronage the house has that evening. "We finished the album tonight," Mike tells the barman.

Mike and Toby talk about when they think the band will record again. At least not until the end of '88, they figure. There's no way John will bring out a new album before then. Probably early '89. And that's if he doesn't do a greatest hits. Or a live album.

"We've gotta have one more album before we do a greatest hits," says Mike.

Toby is the youngest looking and the most animated member of the group, although he's the second oldest, at 38, behind Cascella. Long, wavy brown hair comes down to the top of his eyes. He has high cheekbones and no lines, and is tall and thin. And he is passionate about everything, his motions little explosions of punctuation: slapping the table-top, leaning forward to breathlessly tell you an anecdote, throwing himself back against the banquette, simply overwhelmed by the excitement of life.

As we get ready to go somewhere else, the manager comes up and asks how the album is going, and Mike tells him it's finished. So the manager calls for a bottle of Jagermeister, which no one has heard of before, and pours everyone a shot to celebrate. "It's a sort of licorice liqueur, it's strong," explains the manager. It tastes like diluted shoe polish.

At the Bluebird, we order drinks, quick, to get the taste out. The bar is crowded and hot. Rick explains that John rarely goes out because the crowds are no fun for him. But, Rick said, he turned up for Tim's birthday party at the Bluebird. Everyone was surprised. He even got up and sang.

Toby knows the group playing tonight, Recordia, a good rock 'n' roll cover band. Their manager asks him if he wants to play and he says yes. When they are ready to begin, the lead singer announces him and Toby bounds out of the crowd and up onto the stage. Squeals of "I love you, Toby!" come from the women in our group. He takes the bass he's handed, plugs it in and walks around the stage tuning it and discussing with the singer what they're going to do.

They start with "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and that's as close as they got to a ballad all night. They played pure rock 'n' roll—the Stones, Creedence, Animals, the Beatles, and Steppenwolf—for an hour and a half. Nobody threw beer. Everyone danced.



They made me wear it.

My new SPIN T-shirt, that is. SPIN has a new line of customized T-shirts and sweat-shirts. The T's are black, 100% cotton, have the SPIN logo on the front, and cost \$8.20, including shipping and handling. The sweatshirts are black, 50% cotton—50% polyester, have our logo on the front, and

(nice touch!) a 45 RPM adaptor design on the back. They cost \$16.70, including shipping and handling. Both come in small, medium, large, and extra large. Send check or money order to: SPIN Shirts, 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023. Allow six weeks for delivery.

MARILLION

"We've never been a fashionable band, but in the pubs we'd be welcomed with open arms."



—FISH, lead singer, Marillion

In 1981, Marillion was selling out huge clubs in England, but no record company would sign them. They felt their music wouldn't appeal to "modern kids."

It wasn't the first time a record company was wrong.

In late 1982, EMI Records realized that the same audiences who were filling the clubs and pubs were also potential record buyers, and signed them to the label.

Smart move for EMI.

In 1983, Marillion's debut lp *Script For A Jester's Tear*, entered England's album charts at #7 and spawned 3 hit singles.



In 1984, Marillion released their second album *Fugazi*. It too went top ten in England.

In 1985, Marillion released their third lp, *Misplaced Childhood*.



Things have never been the same since.

★ It was the chart topping single "Kayleigh" from this album, which took the band onto superstar status in Europe and opened radio's ears in America, where the single climbed to #5 on the album radio charts.

Following their sell-out European tour, the band toured extensively in the U.S. to wildly positive audiences. They loved them so much that when they played the



Roxy in L.A., their 2 shows sold out within 2 hours!

Concert promoters were stunned.



Which brings us to 1987 and the release of *Clutching At Straws*.

Featuring the tracks "Incommunicado," "Warm Wet Circles"

and "Sugar Mice," this lp will introduce Marillion fully and finally to America—to you.

"We're not in the mainstream...we're one-of-a-kind. If you have to call us something, you'd have to say we're Marillionesque."

—FISH, lead singer, Marillion



PETER TREWAVAS

IAN MOSLEY

FISH

STEVE ROTHERY

MARK KELLEY

If there's only one lp you're going to buy this year, make it *Clutching At Straws*.

They're the kind of band that once you hear them, you'll want to kick yourself for not having found out about them sooner.



And be sure to catch Marillion this summer on their extensive tour of the U.S.

Then you'll understand why when Marillion is on the marquee, there ain't no empty seats inside.



MY LUNCH WITH CHE

It was 20 years ago today.

Memoir by
Scott Cohen



Amy Sessler



Basil Berry

He was late. I had just dropped two tabs of pure Owsley Sunshine and was waiting by the undulating bar when Che, in his pressed fatigues and beret, burst into the restaurant and, grabbing me by the arm, marched up to the maitre d' with the same triumphant stride as when he entered Havana.

"Señor, your best table, por favor," Che commanded in flawless English, slipping the maitre d' a huge wad of funny money. "Right this way, sir," the maitre d' smiled, palming the dough and leading us to a mighty fine table indeed, complete with light show, head shops, crash pad, Hare Krishnas, and, in the center, Golden Gate Park, where 20,000 hippies, including Ken Kesey and the Jefferson Airplane, were having a Be-in.

What a gas! At the table to our right, Dr. Timothy Leary, the High Priest of LSD, dressed in Holy Man white cotton pajamas, was lunching with his press agent; at another table, Huey P. Newton, chairman of the Black Panther Party, was describing the spawning habits of the spotted trout to the Smothers Brothers, while hovering above them, I swear I saw Diane Linkletter munching on a bowl of crunchy granola and peyote.

Also power lunching: Lyndon B. Johnson, displaying the long diagonal scar from his kidney stone and gall bladder operations to a totally amazed Wavy Gravy; Peter Max, debonair in a blue paisley Nehru jacket, like the one Johnny Carson wore with a turtle-neck on the "Tonight Show"; the bass player from Moby Grape, looking as if he had smoked too many banana peels; a svelte and braless Nancy Sinatra, tête-à-tête with Scott McKenzie, who wore a gladiola in

his hair; and a ravishing Madame Nhu, in teased hair, Ray-Bans, and a tight, clinging dress, with the Maharishi, who was sitting, lotus-style, on her plate.

But the real center of attention was definitely Ernesto "Che" Guevara, one of the few genuine heroes of our time, the last of the true romantics, and a Gemini. A certified Argentinian doctor who had abandoned medicine for bullets, he had courageously waged all-out war on poverty, oppression, imperialism, and injustice, spending most of his life in the jungle, naked and hungry, forging rivers and surviving on hawk meat, when he could have lived comfortably in a big house in Buenos Aires. But the reason that his poster was adorning walls from Haight Ashbury to Picadilly Circus was that he looked like a rock star. Fidel Castro may have been more charismatic, but his poster did not inspire a generation, like Che's. Fidel resembled Jerry Garcia, who was sitting at a cozy table with Mama Cass; Che looked like Jim Morrison.

Which was the reason for our lunch. The revolution in America was failing. The hippies were being exploited and co-opted by greedy commercial interests, and desperately needed to be organized. Meanwhile the New Left, hopelessly divided into factions like S.D.S., P.L., Weathermen, Yippies, Black Panthers, United Farm Workers, and Chicanos, had to be unified. Che was our last hope. He had total brand-name recognition. It was my mission to enlist him.

"The true revolution is in fashion," Che was saying, as a TV camera crew, led by Geraldo Rivera, began setting up their lights around our table. "And to be a total NOW person you need a total look," he continued, ignoring the intrusion. "To be free, women must learn how to sit in a miniskirt," which El Comandante demonstrated by standing up, bending his knees,

stepping back on his right toe, and sitting on the edge of his chair with his knees together and feet apart, so that his skirt hung properly. Then, flashing that victorious smile of his, Che withdrew a Havana cigar from his breast pocket, lit it, and sent up a perfect smoke ring, which Diane Linkletter elegantly caught on her second finger.

"The miniskirt is ideal for dancing, striking, and protesting the American bombing in Vietnam," said Che, his blue eyes swirling like tiny lava lamps. "It's the only way to dress." Then he went on to reveal his designs for a disposable miniskirt, which after two or three wearings could be tossed away, and which he planned to sell to Hallmark, the greeting card people, as part of a party kit with matching cups, plates, place mats, napkins, and invitations. And that's not all. Che had many, many plans; his pockets bulged with them. Plans for flowering muumius and bottomless bell-bottoms. Revolutionary huarache sandals to be manufactured on communes in New Mexico. Che had a whole counter-couture line of truly wow proportions, inspired by Eldridge Cleaver and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. And not just clothing. Che had grand designs for roach clips, day-glo camouflage, mood rings, and Bolivia, although the latter would be interrupted by CIA-trained government troops. "But this is nothing," Che declared, his voice dropping to a whisper. "I've got something that will blow your mind. But first you must promise me you won't tell anyone. Do I have your word?"

Before I could answer, a guy with piercing Rasputin eyes, accompanied by three women with X's on their foreheads, entered the restaurant and the room fell into a dead silence, except for the jukebox, which played "Helter Skelter."

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SEAGRAM'S 7 AND 92°



Seagram's Seven Crown

America's Good Time Spirit.

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